



Price of a barrel  
of petroleum  
today:  
**US\$ 33,98**

**INSIDE TODAY**  
**WORLD NEWS**

**GREGG WITHDRAWS**



In this Feb. 3, 2009 file photo, then-Commerce Secretary-designate Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., speaks in the Grand Foyer of the White House in Washington. Gregg has withdrawn his nomination to become President Barack Obama's commerce secretary. *See INTERNATIONAL NEWS*

**SPORTS NEWS**

**DROUGHT ENDS**



Jeff Gordon raises the trophy in victory lane after winning the first of two NASCAR Gatorade Duel 150 qualifying auto races at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla., Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009.

*See Sports Today*

## "Crime" prevention project presented to the Police

ORANJESTAD - Recently at the Police Station in Santa Cruz with Police Commissioner De Witte and Mrs. Trudy Hassel, Mr. Monrick Croes project "Crime in Aruba" was presented. The intention is that this project will be evaluated by the Aruban Government and considered for implementation as a source of social information in our community. Crime in Aruba is the work of a yearlong study and research that Mr. Croes did as a final thesis study at the University of Stenden in Holland.

This whole project entails valuable information that could be used in conjunction with the police department and also social services to reduce and prevent crime in all aspects on our beautiful island of Aruba.

According to Monrick Croes, our identity is very important, and for us to know exactly who we are as Arubans. We have to point out that what we adapt from our neighboring



lands from Cable TV and fictional movies can confuse the mind of the youth that without proper supervision can go down the wrong path, especially if they are no longer attending school.

A conscientious presentation

about crime is a mandatory necessity for big and small at our schools and also government departments and the private sectors. Soon there will be a response from the Minister of Justice Mr. Rudy Croes, in what way

this project can be utilized and if there's a green light to proceed. On the picture you can see, Commissioner De Witte, Trudy Hassel and also Mr. Monrick Croes at the Santa Cruz Police Station. □

*Tonight at the Village across from the Radisson Resort*

## Chino Latino goes back in time tonight



PALM BEACH - Every Friday go back to the 80, 90 and 2000 at Chino Latino in The Village with a live DJ starting at 11 pm till 3 am, the perfect way to kick-start

your weekend

On Sunday's, Chino Latino goes Brunch "a la carte", not waiting in line for the buffet, just sit back a order as much as you want.

Enjoy 4 cold appetizers, 5 hot appetizers, 5 entrees and 4 desserts all in tapas style. All the food is from the Asian and Latin food menu, a must try for a perfect combination for only \$30 \$ including soft drinks, juices, coffee, tea, mimosa and champagne. Join us every Sunday from 11am till 2.30 pm

*Continued on Page 5*

Premium Chicken Line  
Crispy or Grilled



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CONDOMINIUMS  
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PERIOD DISCOUNT OFFER!

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Digicel closes a special alliance with the organizations for women

## Womens Club Of Aruba Shows Appreciation To Digicel

Today starts the campaign of sending SMS to win a ticket to Miami

ORANJESTAD - The directors of the Women's Club of Aruba recently visited the main office of Digicel Aruba so they can show their appreciation for their support, cooperation and commitment during the past year. Being the fastest growing cellular company in Aruba, The Antilles, The Caribbean, Latin America and now even in the Pacific Ocean, this company has been showing support to many non-profit foundations in social, cultural and athletic fields.

Women's Club annually helps a wide variety of other non-profit foundations and on their own; they organize several projects to the benefit of our community.

One of their challenges was lodgings and that is where Digicel stepped in and offered a lending hand to help the organization that already exists for many years. To accomplish their goals, an sms-campaign was started, were clients of Digicel could send an SMS to the number



7575 with the word MIAMI and win a all-paid vacation for two to Miami.

The campaign starts today and runs till the 6th of March. Each SMS costs 1 Guilder and

will go as a donation to the foundation that works to the benefit of the women of our Island. On the pictures you can appreciate the directors of Women's Club with the

Management of Digicel Aruba, represented by its General Manager Michelle Winklaar and Marketing Director for the ABC Islands, Wanda Broeksema. □

**MPG** REAL ESTATE  
WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!

Very Nice home in Noord  
In an Excellent Residential Area!  
Owner Financing Available!

Address: Sabana Libre, Palm Court 23-3

Price: \$ 228,000  
2 bed rooms, 2 bath rooms  
572 m2 Property land

The house has a very comfortable layout, consisting of a spacious living, dining area and a nice open kitchen, laundry, storage room. A big covered patio to enjoy the sunset and the breeze. A beautiful landscape garden with a drip system and a car garage. The house is fully fenced and secure. This home is in a very good condition and well maintained. There is nothing like it in that area at this price.

**Call Muna 5934647**  
and many more listing  
[www.mpgaruba.com](http://www.mpgaruba.com) [muna@mpgaruba.com](mailto:muna@mpgaruba.com)





# VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL

## All you can eat lobster and Mediterranean buffet

(or choose from our delicious a la carte options)

**DATE:** Saturday February 14, 2009

**PRICE:** \$58.00 adult

\$29.00 children (aged 5 and under eat free)

La Vista Restaurant is located at the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino



Show your winning heart on Valentine's Day

# Louis Vuitton brings enchanted new colorful collection

and a tribute to Stephen Sprouse



ORANJESTAD – Especially for Valentine's Day Louis Vuitton again steals the show, this time with another trendy and colorful collection of their Vernis bags and wallets, the famous "heart shaped coin purse", a special touch



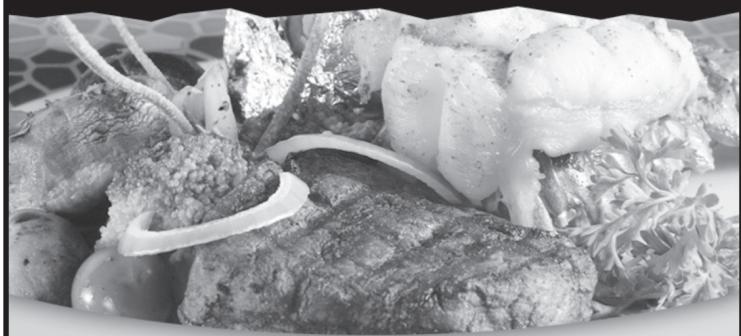
for this day and a "must to be" mentioned the Stephen Sprouse collection.

Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs wanted to pay tribute to the work of Stephen Sprouse, this was the inspiration for Marc Jacobs to design this new

collection of "Graffiti and Roses".

All these trendy and limited collection of Stephen Sprouse are available in the Louis Vuitton store in the Renaissance Mall.□

## FRIDAYS SPECIAL!



 **KIDS EAT FREE!**  
(up to 10 years old)

...FRESH FISH CAUGHT DAILY  
BY THE OWNER HIMSELF.

A long tradition of serving the finest  
**Seafood & Steaks**  
for over 20 years!

  
Restaurant  
**Driftwood**  
Authentic Aruban Seafood



Open daily from 5:00pm - 10:30pm (closed on Tuesdays)  
For reservations call: 583-2515 - Klipstraat 12, Downtown.  
[www.driftwoodaruba.com](http://www.driftwoodaruba.com)

\* Not valid with any other promotion.

At the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino &amp; Spa

## Friends of the Handicapped invite you to Sweethearts' Valentine's Dinner &amp; Dance



PALM BEACH – Friends of the Handicapped is a volunteer organization made up of tourists, visitors, wintering on the island at Casa Del Mar, Aruba Beach Club, Costa Linda and Playa Linda each year. While on the island they

conduct grass-root fundraising activities culminating with a Sweethearts' Ball, in honor of Valentine's Day, at the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa.

This year the Sweethearts' Valentine's Dinner & Dance

takes place on February 13<sup>th</sup>, in the Grand Caribbean Ballroom and tickets are available by calling foundation president Art Stark at Tel.: 567 4102.

The elegant fund raising event will include a cocktail hour and a three-course dinner,



dancing and surprises, and will be attended by members of the local community and visitors.

Stark is happy to report that FOH concluded its Winter 2008 fund raising season with over Awg 85,000 in donations, which as seen in our pictures

was handed out to the island's not for profit organizations.

To date, says Stark, his group of dedicated repeat visitors collected much more than one million florins and donated the funds to local associations and organizations, dedicated to the welfare of Aruba's mentally and physically handicapped.

Among recipients of generous checks Mi Por, an organization of mothers with handicapped infants; Foster Home Imeldahof; the Edmund Harms Hospice Foundation; the hearing-impaired Funari school & FEPO; Fundacion Respeta Mi which guards against child abuse; Ambiente Nobo, sister Philothea's home for the handicapped; Ambiente Feliz & AVA, catering to special-need kids; Centro Kibrahacha for the elderly; Bibito Pin, a school for children with disabilities; Fundacion Cas Marie, dedicated to those suffering from dementia; the Clown Doctors who visit the elderly and also kids in the hospital's children's ward; the Red Cross dedicated to disaster first response and crisis management; and Fundacion Pa Nos Muchana whose name indicates care for children.

While times might be tough, says Stark, it is even tougher for those dependent on public funding and the needy become needier, in times of economic downturn. Funds collected by FOH will be put to vital use, he remarks, paying for transport, renovations, educational materials, kitchen equipment, wheel chairs and conferences, promoting understanding and acceptance of handicapped members of our society. □

## Romance and Dance

Sway the night away and fall in love again with the taste and melody of the heart

### Menu

#### Appetizer

##### Smoked Salmon Terrine

Smoked salmon stuffed with jumbo lump crab, served on a bed of lettuce, tossed with a delicate passion fruit & capers dressing

or

##### Beef Carpaccio

Thin sliced marinated raw beef fillet served with extra virgin olive oil and shaved Rocca Reggiano cheese over a bed of fresh arugula salad

or

##### Seafood Soup Mediterranean Style

Fresh grouper, shrimps, mussels, clams, squid, baby octopus in a bouquet of fresh herbed - flavored fish bouillon

#### Entrees

##### Grouper Fillet In A Lemon Butter & Capers Sauce

Grouper fillet baked with butter, extra virgin olive oil, capers, lemon and fresh parsley. Accompanied by : Boiled potato, Ratatouille, Broccoli or

##### Churrasco Mr.Jazz

U.S. Tenderloin, juicy, tender & lean, 12 oz

Accompanied by Potato au gratin , mushrooms sauteed with spinach or

##### Chicken Grill Fiorentina

Chicken fillet baked in extra virgin olive oil and topped with fresh spinach, cream and parmesan cheese Accompanied by : Ratatouille, Vegetable Risotto

#### Dessert

##### Tiramisu

or

##### Apple Pie A La Mode

\$45.99 + 3% BBG per person

Includes 2 glasses of Champagne

Each Lady will receive a Rose

MR JAZZ

STEAKS

& JAZZ



# Give Her an Ocean of Love this Valentine's with our 3-course Special Dinner Menu!

\$59.50  
per person

Menu includes a glass of  
Pol Clement Brut sparkling wine.  
15% Service Charge and 3% Tax will be added to your check.

Valentine's Special valid on February 13, 14 & 15

Located across from the Hyatt and Occidental Resort, next door to Amazonia Churrascaria.  
Open 6pm till 11pm / Sun. 4pm till 11pm. For information and reservations: Tel: 586-5900 - E-mail: aqua-grill@setarnet.aw



## Chino Latino goes back in time tonight



Photos by Julia Renfro

Every Wednesday night, Chino Latino turns into "BARRIO LATINO" with a live band starting 11 pm, playing the best Spanish and Latin music till 2 am. All night long enjoy the best mojitos on the island for only \$5. This is the best place to meet the locals who like the night life and to have fun.

The kitchen at Chino Latino is open daily from 11 am till 2 am. □



Photos by Julia Renfro



Photos by Julia Renfro



Come and Celebrate  
Valentine's Day at  
**Amazônia**  
CHURRASCARIA

• More than 40 just-made salads  
• The largest meat selection on the island  
• The Ultimate Dining Experience

We are open for dinner daily from 6pm to 11pm and on Sunday from 4pm to 11pm

FOR RESERVATION CALL 586-4444

J.E. Irausquin Blvd 374, Palm Beach, Aruba.  
Across the street from the Hyatt Resort  
next door to Aqua Grill restaurant.  
[www.amazonia-aruba.com](http://www.amazonia-aruba.com)

# Brunch in the Name of Love at Aquarius restaurant



ORANJESTAD — Aquarius Restaurant will be offering brunch in the name of love on Saturday February 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday February 15<sup>th</sup>, from noon till 3:30 p.m., at \$30 per person, plus service charge, in celebration of Valentine's Day.

The sumptuous Champagne brunch will delight good-food lovers, and Carnival fans, eager to watch the Lighting Parade, on Saturday night.



All ladies will be welcomed with a red rose upon arrival. The fantastic menu, a veritable feast in the tradition of a classic restaurant includes everyone's favorite foods. Start off with a rich Salad Bar with Red Beet Salad, Potato Salad, Egg Salad, Coleslaw & Pasta Salad, Seafood Ceviche, Jumbo Shrimp with Champagne Sauce, Salmon Gravlax, Smoked Herring, Peppered Mackerel, Assorted Sushi and Makisushi Rolls, Homemade Seasonal Pickled Vegetables, Liver Pate Baby Shrimp Cocktail, and Tomato & Baby Mozzarella Salad.

The Steaming Kettle will alternate a tasty soup each day and the hot entrees will be selected by the Chef in honor of the occasion,

**CRYSTAL & SEAPORT  
CASINOS**

# Valentine's Day

*is very romantic at Crystal & Seaport Casinos*

Saturday February 14th from 6pm till 9pm

**2x Points!**

when playing with "The Card"  
on Valentine's Day at both casinos  
between 6pm & 9pm

**Special Gift!**

for the first 100 players  
to bring this ad between 6pm & 9pm  
at the Player's Center



For more information, please call 523-6318 or 523-6437



cooking instructions. Also on the buffet, fresh-baked Breads including Croissants, Muffins, Banana Bread, assorted Danish Rolls & French bread accompanied by an international cheese board.

Dessert, the affair's finishing touch will deliver Pistachio Crème Brûlée, Quesillo, Tiramisu Chocolate Cake, Napoleon Rum Cake, Chocolate Mousse, Tropical Fruits & Banana Chiboust, Coffee or Tea and a welcome Mimosa. Children six to twelve years, are welcome at half price.

Lover's Valentine's Brunch will be served in the stylish comfort of Aquarius restaurant on the lobby level of the Renaissance Aruba Resort, Marina Tower. Valentine's brunch at Aquarius is an outstanding choice to show your love and special sentiments. Call +297 583-6000, ext.: 6156 for reservations. □



with international and local creations of Beef, Chicken, Fish, Pork and Lamb specialties.

The Carving Block will prominently display Roast Prime Beef au jus with horseradish and mustard sauce, plus the Chef's selection of roasted Ham, Turkey or Pork Loin and the Action Station, will feature Omelets and Pastas tossed to order by a chef following patrons' own



## 15% discount

Bring this ad at the Box-Office of the CRYSTAL Theater at the Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino and get 15% discount. Box-office open from 02pm till 09pm from Monday through Saturday.

### The hottest Cuban show ticket on the island! SHOW DATES: TUESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY

#### HAVANA DANCE DINNER & SHOW PACKAGE

## LOVE YOUR STEAK!

  
RENAISSANCE.  
RESORT

# HAVANA Dance

*The New 2009 Production of the Let's Go Latin!*

The elegant Crystal Theater sparkles with all the excitement of Las Vegas as the magnificent

**HAVANA**  
*Dance* takes the stage.

A thrilling mix of Latin/Cuban music, colorful costumes and high energy modern/traditional Cuban dance.

**HAVANA**  
*Dance* is the biggest stage production in the Caribbean featuring true Cuban dancers and entertainers directly from Havana.

Don't miss it!

Show time: Tuesday - Saturday at 9pm

Ticket Price: \$49 / Children under 12 pay \$25

Dinner Show package at L.G. Smith's Steak and Chop House \$89

For reservations and information, please call 583-6000 ext. 6115 (between 9am till 5pm) after 5pm please call 583-6000 ext. 6357 Tickets available at concierge desks and the box office at the Renaissance Resort.

L.G. SMITH'S

STEAK & CHOP HOUSE

[www.lgsmiths.com](http://www.lgsmiths.com)

L.G. Smith's Steak & Chop House offers mouthwatering American steak house fare and an extensive international wine list. Enjoy Aruba's premiere location for superb dining in a stylish décor.

**GREAT SHOW, GREAT STEAKS,  
GREAT SERVICE, GREAT PRICES**

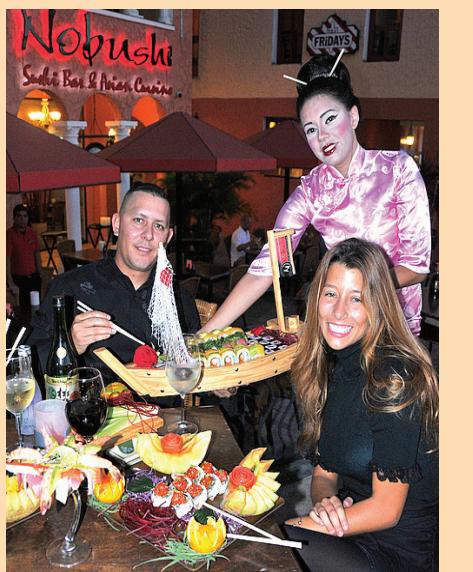
Open daily from 5:30pm until 11pm

Recommended seatings 5:30pm - 6pm - 6:30pm

For reservations call 523-6195

Located next to the Crystal Casino

\*Price includes show ticket and 3-course dinner show menu.



## NOBUSHI

Celebrate St. Valentine's Day & SUSHI Lovers  
NOW Sushi & Asian Cuisine

Celebrate St. Valentine's Day and Sushi Lovers. Receive a "FREE" Ticket for Morgan's Island "Aqua Park".

For reservations: 586 2211 cell 592 4021 open:  
Saturday 14 february  
12:m - 12:m



NOBUSHI at the Paseo Herencia Mall accross from the Holiday INN. **Free Ticket for Morgan's Island Aqua Park**

**JOLLY Pirates**  
SAIL, SNORKEL, SWIM & SWING!  
DAILY 9:30-2pm \$55pp  
Visit 3 Great sites with BBQ, Open Bar, Gear & Ropeswing!  
**AFTERNOON SNORKEL**  
DAILY 3-6pm only \$33pp  
Shorter version of am cruise  
Open Bar, Gear & Ropeswing!  
**SUNSET SAIL**  
Mon & Fri 5-7pm only \$27pp  
Open Bar included

Call 586 8107 or 592 7858

**\$10 off**  
Valid only with direct tel. reservation - cannot be combined with other offers. Save \$10 per coupon/per couple for morning cruises. Save \$5 per coupon/per couple for afternoon cruises.

It doesn't get more romantic than this...

## Take your Sweetheart on a Valentine's Sail

**Valentine Dinner Sail**  
Live Steeldrum Music  
Caribbean Buffet Dinner  
Romantic Atmosphere

Saturday February 14  
from 6 to 9 pm  
\$79 per person  
includes Open Bar and Caribbean Buffet Dinner

For Reservations  
Call 586-1603

**red sail sports**  
ARUBA



From Friday Night until Sunday

## 48 hours of VALENTINE'S

Join us for Recession Valentine's Weekend. Friday Until All Day Sunday Enjoy A Recession Valentine's Weekend, Special Happy Hour for Three Days which includes Two-For-One Red Stripe from 5 Pm Till 7pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening. All Three Evenings Valentine's Couples will receive a Free Bottle of wine and a gift from Jamaica for all of the women.

Red Stripe Beer is A 12 Oz Beer and Guinness is Two For One

Kool Runnings is The Home Of Red Stripe & Guinness

DON'T JUST LIVE **LIVE RED**  
Red Stripe  
LAGER BEER  
BREWED IN JAMAICA

**LOCATED AT THE HOLIDAY INN**

Monday \$25 buy-in \$2,500 Guaranteed  
Tuesday \$25 Buy-in \$2,500 Guaranteed  
Wednesday \$10 Buy-in \$1,000 Guaranteed  
Thursday \$25 Buy-in \$2,500 Guaranteed  
Friday \$50 Buy-in \$4,000 Guaranteed  
Saturday \$10 Buy-in \$1,500 Guaranteed  
Sunday Free Roll No Entry Fee \$2,000 (at 5pm)  
(Tournaments are subject to change as per Management criteria)

**SPORTS BOOK**  
No charge or tax on winnings  
Live simulcast of all major tracks  
Highest limits in Aruba  
Sports Book opens at 12:30 pm

**POKER ROOM**  
EARLY BIRD SPECIAL  
7 p.m.  
**TEXAS HOLD-EM**  
\$4-\$8 LIMIT  
BUY-IN FOR \$30 RECEIVE \$60 IN CHIPS  
MUST PLAY TWO (2) HOURS

**CONVENIENT PARKING**

*Located at the Holiday Inn  
Where There's Always A Game*

At Moby Dick's Restaurant

## Fall into the sea of love in the most romantic setting

PASEO HERENCIA – Moby Dick's has one mission; to take you to the depths of the blue ocean to taste some of the most exquisite dishes to come from the deep. What a truly beautiful restaurant this is, and what a unique interior to match. The inside is studded with artwork, amazing glass carvings, and both floors are dominated by gigantic fountains, with water running from ceiling to floor along multicoloured lit fibre optic cables. The stairway is lined by an impressive painting which runs along the complete wall. The menu promises to be a true seafood lovers dream. Lobsters, fresh fish fillets, shrimps, Moby Dick's has everything on the menu. There is of course a land lubbers section for those who are so disposed. The wine list is impressive to say the least, and the cocktails are definitely worth a taste.

Moby Dick's is open for lunch as well. The chef has made a well rounded, extensive menu



for you to choose from. You will find what you want, whatever your craving may be at that time. The staff is amongst the friendliest on the island, ever so attentive to your every whim. So long story short, for unbelievable seafood in unique surroundings, go to Moby Dick's. You'll have a whale of a time!

**For More information and Reservations  
Call: 586 8333**

## BE MY VALENTINE

*Ventanas del Mar*



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>

For reservations Call us: 586 7800 • Limited seating

### Appetizers

**Tuna & Lump Crab Parfait • US\$12.50**  
Timbale of sashimi tuna tar and lump crab served with citrus curry aïoli and grilled pineapple mango salsa or

**Rich Seafood Bouillabaisse • US\$ 9.50**  
Rich soup made with assorted seafood served with shrimps, saffron cognac cream, Rouille and garlic croutons

### Sherbet

Refreshing passion fruits sherbet served Grand Marnier champagne drizzle

### Entrees

**Chilean Sea Bass Fillet & Jumbo Scallops • US\$ 36.00**  
Pan seared served with fresh laghitarra pasta and brown butter citrus sauce or

**Surf & Turf • US\$ 42.50**  
Beef Tournedos, Garlic sautéed rock lobster tail and tiger prawns served with truffled veal sauce

### Dessert

**Strawberry Panna cotta • US\$ 7.50**  
Fresh strawberries vanilla flan, served with chocolate balsamic syrup, caramelized walnuts and lemon grass vanilla sauce

Price for the Whole Menu P/P: \$55.00  
Plus 15% service charge • Add 3% Local Tax  
A complimentary Rose and Kir Royale for all ladies.

*A perfect wedding in Paradise*

# Amber & Brian exchange vows at sunset with loved ones



## Special wedding Edition by Angela Munzenhofer

TIERRA DEL SOL- On February 4, 2008 Amber Landry & Brian Lozynski from Astoria, New York said "I Do" at Town Hall. The ceremony was delivered by Betto Christiaans who welcomed the couple to Aruba to become one as he announced them husband and wife.

The lovebirds work in the same industry, Brian at ESPN and Amber at Hallmark Channel. They were introduced by co-workers at a Las Vegas convention in October 2005. It was an inevitable faith that

drew there love that day and got to know one another. Through an everlasting friendship they evolved as a loving couple.

Brian proposed during a random night at their favorite restaurant 'Christos Steak House'. Brian had prepared this special evening with all the whistles, He even brought the staff the camera earlier so they can capture the special moment. As Brian & Amber were seated at dinner they were given the menu's and as Amber opened the tri-fold Brian was on one knee as she read "Amber will you Marry Me. The wedding plans began and

Aruba was chosen as their wedding destination since they have been on the island twice prior for vacation and fell in love with paradise. The wedding was booked through an outside planner, Cayenna Weddings which then was put in the great hands of wedding coordinator Edwina Werleman of E2 Events and Celebrations on island who took care of orchestrating the perfect details in making Amber and Brian's dream wedding a reality.

On February 7, 2009 the wedding ceremony and reception took place at Aruba's famous Tierra del Sol. The golf course was transformed into a magical evening with 51 friends and family united together from all parts of the USA. The romantic ceremony was delivered by Robert Gibson. Amber & Brian said "I Do" with the gorgeous backdrop of waves crashing and the golf course. Bella Aruba Photography made sure to capture every angle of their special day. Following the photo shoot the guests enjoyed a cocktail hour at the terrace of Tierra del Sol. The

band "Marisella" and the gang did an outstanding job at creating the perfect music for this lively crowd. Dinner was served grand buffet style and the newlyweds cut into two wedding cakes. The guests were not scared away by the small rain showers throughout the evening as they kept dancing

the night away under the starlit evening. The full moon made the evening shine through till 11pm. Amber and Brian are leaving today back to N.Y and Aruba Today wishes them a safe flight home and a new beginning of love and happiness. □

**Photos by Angela Munzenhofer**



**Preparing For Valentine's Day & Carnival**  
**Ruth's Chris Calls For Celebrations in the Month Of February**

PALM BEACH— Ruth's Chris Steak House calls for celebrations during the month of February and wants to share it with you!

On February 14th, the famed steak house celebrates the day of love: Valentine's Day.

For this special occasion, couples will find the perfect environment for a romantic night out. Cozy corners, two private dining rooms and a romantic ambiance make up this 200 seat steak house. Great wines, sizzling dishes and a list of delicious desserts that are large enough to be shared by two, are all the ingredients needed for an unforgettable dining experience.

Ruth's Chris Chef Charles Wagner, famed for his pastries at the Aruba Marriott in previous years, will add some extra "romance" to the desserts on Valentine's Day. If you are in for festive cocktails and some quality time with your loved one at our cozy bar, general manager Eduard Renaud recommends a taste of the famous Orange Mojito, Ruth's Chris' signature drink. During a recent bartender contest held on the island, one of Marriott's bartenders won the "Best Carnival Drink on the island" with this tasty Mojito.

"With Aruba currently celebrating its 55th edition of Carnival, it is the most popular drink to order at the bar. And very tasty too", commented Renaud. □



# Sherard Wernet Promoted at De Palm Tours

ORANJESTAD - De Palm Tours recently promoted Mr. Sherard Wernet for his excellent work, enthusiastic and willing to learn character all attributed to his promotion.

Sherard Wernet was recently promoted to Captain. Sherard started working at Visser Trading and Compra.

He then joined De Palm Watersports N.V. as a crewmember on July 4th, 2000 on casual basis.

On November 1st, 2000 he became full time

as mate. Sherard has 8 years of service and throughout the years he has followed several courses. He did the PADI Medic first aid course and he also finalized the small boatmasters certificate. He is also specialized in the maintenance of both De Palm Pleasure and Sea Star catamarans.

De Palm Tours is proud of having an excellent employee as Sherard Wernet. Wishing you the best and success with your new duties and responsibilities. □



## Love Is In The Air

at Renaissance Marketplace

Visit one of the bars or restaurant at the Renaissance Marketplace on February 13th, and receive a chocolate from Taste of Belgium

*Special offers for this day only:*

Cafe the Plaza: Lover's dessert for \$5, Lover's cocktail for \$5

Grand Cafe Tropical: Let we surprise you with a nice Valentine's cocktail.

Sushi-ya & Nextdoor: "Treat your sweetheart" Sushi & "Next Champagne Cocktail", Sushi Lover's Special, Valentine's roll.

Scandals: Special Valentine's menu

Waterfront: Valentines special appetizer, entree and dessert for only \$24.95

Live entertainment by Delbert Bernabela from 7 -9 pm and love songs on stage from 7 - 10 pm

  
**RENAISSANCE®**  
 MARKETPLACE



# Antillean House to go on auction February 24

THE HAGUE--A former employee of the Antillean House in the Netherlands is about to have one of the three buildings in The Hague auctioned because the Central Government still owes her money in overdue salary.

Vivien Pengel-Calmez was acting director at the Antillean House for one year, from 2004 to 2005. She received her first letter of dismissal in April 2005. However, the letter lacked motivation. Pengel-Calmez took the case to the Court which annulled the dismissal because the required federal decision was lacking. When she showed up for work again, Pengel-Calmez received a second letter of

dismissal. She was placed on non-active duty and was refused entry to the Antillean House. Again, the Court annulled the dismissal because the federal resolution lacked a signature of the Governor of the Netherlands Antilles. The Court denounced the Central Government's handling of the matter and stated that Willemstad had broken its own rules. The Court decided it was a matter of bad governance and ordered the Central Government to pay Pengel-Calmez her overdue salary.

In September 2006, Pengel-Calmez received her third dismissal letter and again the Court annulled the decision

because the date on the federal resolution was not correct. The final, legally correct dismissal, followed in November of that year. The Antillean House only paid 12,000 Euro to Pengel-Calmez in overdue salaries and also paid 35,000 Euro to her creditors in Curaçao. The former deputy director had a lien placed on the Antillean House and on the bank accounts of the Central Government late 2007. Through a court injunction, Willemstad managed to prevent the auction of the three buildings of the Antillean House in The Hague.

The Central Government still hasn't paid Pengel-Calmez the full amount and, in possession

of a new Court decision in her favour, the former deputy director has given a notary office in The Hague the order to auction one of the three monumental buildings of the Antillean House located next to the residence of Minister Plenipotentiary Paul Comenencia. The auction has

been announced for February 24.

Antillean House Director Robbert Candelaria said there was no reason to panic. He said the Central Government will take the necessary measures to stop the auction. One of the possibilities is through a court injunction. □

## Economic summit still in the making

PHILIPSBURG--As the global economic crisis slowly sinks its claws into St. Maarten, plans for an economic summit to brainstorm ideas to mitigate the impact and stem the bleeding are still on the books.

Economic Affairs Commissioner Maria Buncamper-Molanus said Wednesday that the draft memorandum of understanding to be signed between government and the private sector was making its rounds through the various departments. It will reach the Executive Council soon and will be the precursor to the summit.

A public forum at which Netherlands Antilles Central Bank President Emsley Tromp will give an overview of the crisis and its impact on the Antilles, St. Maarten in particular, will lead up to the summit, the commissioner said. Tromp has committed to the forum but still has to indicate a time to suit his schedule. In the interim, to ensure the economic cogs continue spinning, Buncamper-Molanus will be submitting a proposal to the Executive Council to lift the moratorium on the issuance of vending licences.

The moratorium was placed some years ago to regulate the number of people who applied for the licences, but were renting them to others or did not have a viable business approach. Lifting of the stop is seen by Buncamper-Molanus as a way to get people working to provide needed services. □

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# The Caribbean ranks at the top in Destinations for Value, Romance, Family and Luxury Vacations According to TripAdvisor.com

NEW YORK – TripAdvisor has announced its annual “Traveler’s Choice” Awards for 2009 and select properties in the Caribbean have ranked among the world’s best for value, romance, family, all-inclusive and luxury vacations.

The annual honors are a representation of the unbiased opinions of real travelers, awarded by the world’s largest online travel community.

The awards are given based on the consumer feedback of TripAdvisor’s more than 10 million members. Inclusion is reflective of the quantity and quality of reviews a hotel or resort receives. A wealth of Caribbean destinations were represented in 2009 including Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bonaire, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Martin and Turks and Caicos.

“TripAdvisor’s ‘Traveler’s Choice’ Awards are of particular importance to the Caribbean as they reflect the unfettered opinion of our guests without provocation or persuasion,” said Hugh Riley, interim secretary general of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. “We want to impress our guests with an authentic Caribbean experience that can’t be duplicated elsewhere in the world, whether they are looking for the perfect family, romantic or luxury getaway. This recognition proves that we are doing that and we thank our loyal guests for making their voices heard on our behalf.”

The Caribbean’s 2009 TripAdvisor “Traveler’s Choice” Award winners are:

Top 100 Best Bargains in the World:

- 27) Deep Blue View Intimate Resort (Safir, Bonaire)
- 33) Peach and Quiet (Christ Church, Barbados)
- 47) The Inn on the Bay (Marigot Bay, St. Lucia)
- 52) Catcha Falling Star (Negril, Jamaica)

Top 10 Best All-Inclusives in

the World:

- 1) The Caves (Negril, Jamaica)
- 2) Mopan River Resort (Benque Viejo del Carmen, Belize)
- 6) Royal Plantation (Ocho Rios, Jamaica)
- 8) Sunset at the Palms (Negril, Jamaica)
- 10) East Winds Inn (Gros Islet, St. Lucia)

Top 10 Best for Families in the World:

- 9) FDR Pebbles (Falmouth, Jamaica)
- Top 10 Best for Romance in the World:
- 3) The Caves (Negril, Jamaica)
- 8) Golden Tulip Bucuti Beach Resort & Tara Beach Suites (Oranjestad, Aruba)

Top 100 Best Luxury in the World:

- 5) The Caves (Negril, Jamaica)
- 9) Seven Stars Resort (Providenciales, Turks and Caicos)
- 18) Little Arches Hotel (Christ Church, Barbados)
- 32) Chabil Mar Villas (Placencia, Belize)
- 37) The Tuscany

(Providenciales, Turks and Caicos)

- 44) Jamaica Inn (Ocho Rios, Jamaica)
- 48) Rock House (Harbour Island, Bahamas)
- 57) East Winds Inn (Gros Islet, St. Lucia)
- 69) Villa Renaissance (Providenciales, Turks and Caicos) □

# Love your Valentine

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**Valentine's Menu**

**Cherish the Heart**  
Cream of Asparagus with crisp plantain chips

**Roses are Red**  
Yellow Fin Tuna Carpaccio served with mixed baby greens, shaved Parmesan cheese and a soy, ginger-honey dressing

**A Secret Liaison**  
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# American Idol semifinalist disqualified

LOS ANGELES — An "American Idol" contestant who made the show's top 36 was disqualified.

In its press release issued Wednesday night announcing the 36 contenders, Fox TV said that Joanna Pacitti was "ineligible to continue." No reason was given.

Felicia Barton of Virginia Beach, Va., replaced Pacitti, a Philadelphia native, in the top 36. The show announced the semifinalists Wednesday night, then later released an update saying it had cut Pacitti loose and subbed in Barton, a 26-year-old married mom.

Pacitti, 23, could not immediately be reached for

comment.

A few of the contestants in Tuesday night's episode, including Pacitti, flubbed the lyrics but made it through to the next round.

Pacitti, who auditioned in Louisville, Ky., entered "Idol" with a showbiz resume. She had a record deal with Geffen and released an album in 2006. Billboard reports it sold more than 16,000 copies. "American Idol" judge Kara DioGuardi recognized Pacitti when she auditioned in Louisville, Ky. She also starred in "Annie" on Broadway as a young girl, and sang on the soundtracks for the movies "Legally Blonde" and "Bratz." Britney Spears'

tune "Out From Under," from her latest album, was first performed by Pacitti on the "Bratz" soundtrack.

All that experience was enough to draw complaints from viewers who thought she was too polished for the top-rated show, which purports to pluck raw talent out of nowhere and turn them into stars.

However, eight seasons in, "Idol" has selected singers who have spent time in the recording studio. Pacitti's situation echoed the controversy over last season's finalists, Carly Smithson and Kristy Lee Cook, who had previous record deals. Smithson had recorded an album for MCA Records, while Cook

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In this image released by Fox, 'American Idol' contestant, Joanna Pacitti, of Philadelphia, is shown.

(AP Photo/Fox, Michael Becker)

once had a deal with Arista Nashville. Other experienced seventh-season singers include Robbie Carrico, who was in the

pop group Boyz N Girlz United, and runner-up David Archuleta, who won "Star Search" in 2003.

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**BUSINESS****Aruba TODAY**

A trader stands on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange January 28, 2009.

(Shannon Stapleton/Reuters)

## Stocks mixed after report of mortgage subsidies

By MADLEN READ,

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — The stock market made a strong late-day comeback after getting some possible good news about mortgages.

The Dow Jones industrial average pared sharp losses to finish down nearly 7 points Thursday after a report that the government plans to subsidize mortgage payments for troubled homeowners. The idea of targeted help for homeowners impressed investors more than the government's \$789 billion economic stimulus package and its revised plan to bail out problem banks.

"It's one little piece of the puzzle that clears up some of the uncertainty," said Joe Keetle, senior wealth manager at Dawson Wealth Management.

To be sure, many questions remain — particularly about how the government plans to remove the complex, souring assets sitting on banks' balance sheets. No one knows how big the losses are going to be for banks, investors and taxpayers — an uncertainty that has been weighing on stocks for months, especially in the financial sector.

"The market is saying, we will give you the capital when we know you've told us the truth about the garbage," said David Darst, chief investment strategist of Morgan Stanley's Global Wealth Management Group.

But a plan focused on the crux of the economy's problems — the housing market — came as at least a temporary relief to investors. If homeowners are able to pay their mortgages, it should not only help the economy, but also keep mortgage-backed assets from losing more value.

According to preliminary calculations, the Dow Jones industrial average slipped 6.77, or 0.09 percent, to 7,932.76, after falling by more than 245 points in earlier trading.

"This is a massive reversal," said Craig Peckham, analyst at Jefferies & Co.

Broader stock indicators ended higher. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 1.45, or 0.17 percent, to 835.19, and the Nasdaq composite index rose 11.21, or 0.73 percent, to 1,541.71.

Peckham said stocks also got a lift from a report that a House committee might approve the temporary suspension of credit default swap trading. Credit default swaps are essentially insurance policies for bond defaults; problems in that market have led to massive losses for financial services companies — most notably, the insurer American International Group Inc.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers by about 8 to 7 on the New York Stock Exchange, where volume came to 1.48 billion shares. □

## Charter Communications to file Chapter 11

PHILADELPHIA — Struggling Charter Communications Inc., the nation's fourth largest cable operator, said Thursday that it plans to file a prearranged Chapter 11 bankruptcy by April 1. Charter, which is controlled by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen, said it has reached an agreement in principle with holders of \$8 billion in debt who will give up repayment of their debt. In return, they will receive common shares, or warrants for rights to get common shares, that translate to nearly owning the entire company after bankruptcy.

Allen will remain as an investor and retain the largest voting interest in Charter. While his 51 percent stake in the company will be wiped out, along with those of other shareholders as the stock is canceled, Allen was given voting control by debt holders. Allen also holds some debt, which will be converted, and preferred stock.

In a prearranged bankruptcy, a company enters into reorganization with a plan to emerge that has the approval of major stakeholders. The rest of the creditors will be dealt with through bankruptcy court. In a prepackaged bankruptcy, each creditor has voted on the plan before the filing.

Charter said it plans to pay what it owes to suppliers and other trade creditors in full and go about the normal course of business.

"We are pleased to have reached an agreement with such a significant portion of our bondholders on a long-term solution to improve our capital

structure," said Neil Smit, president and chief executive officer, in a statement.

Allen, who owns the Seattle Seahawks of the National Football League and the National Basketball Association's Portland Trail Blazers, put in over \$7 billion into Charter, his biggest investment after he left Microsoft in 1983. Over the years, Charter piled on debt for acquisitions. It now serves 5.5 million customers in 27 states. The company said two of its subsidiaries will make a \$74 million interest payment before the 30-day grace period for debt that was due on Jan. 15 expires. Thursday's agreement with debt holders leaves Charter with \$13 billion of mostly bank debt, expiring from 2013 to 2016.

Separately, Charter said fourth-quarter revenue is expected to increase by 6.6 percent to \$1.66 billion, with adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization up nearly 10 percent to \$620 million.

The company expects to take a \$1.5 billion impairment charge for fiscal 2008.

Charter has been skirting insolvency for years, but this time it faces a brutal combination of tight credit and billions of dollars of debt coming due. The company hasn't recorded a profit since it went public in 1999.

Shares of St. Louis-based Charter tumbled 3.4 cents, or 48 percent, to about 3.7 cents on Thursday. The stock earlier hit a low of 2.5 cents. □

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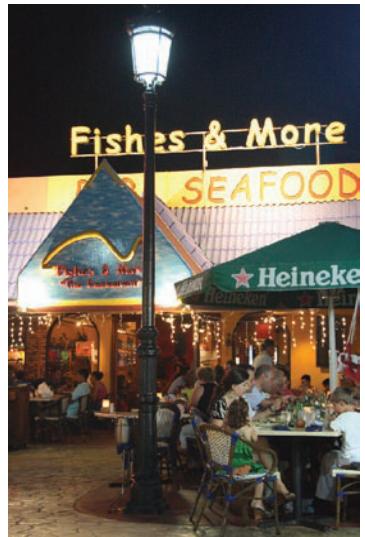
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and Hans Heijink together with the staff Romalo, Heidi, Mariella, Denise and Chef Gerben work hard keeping the restaurant **open 7 days a week from 4 pm till 11pm** for everyone to enjoy. The ambiance at the restaurant is out of this world, whether dinning inside in the relaxed air-conditioned dinning room or outside on the terrace to enjoy the tropical breeze and daily live music. Most guests come in early for the **daily fresh catches**, such as Red snapper, grouper, mahi mahi, wahoo and tuna. Check with the server to find out about the Catch of the day. The chef will be more than happy to prepare your fish the way you like it best: grilled, deep-fried,



pan-fried or the chef's choice. Every Wednesday, seafood specials are prepared depending on what the Fishermen bring in fresh out of the water that afternoon. These specials usually include fresh Caribbean lobster and pounds of peeled shrimps. **Fishes and More** is for everyone, from large groups, families, couples and even singles who can't shake the seafood addiction can stop in for a fix of Pina Colada Shrimp. For those who like to try something different or have had their fill of spectacular seafood, the chef prepares a wonderful array of filet



mignon, rib eye, wiener schnitzel, veal parmesan, and pasta specialties. **Great Seafood!!!** Fun and relaxed atmosphere. Right across from the high rise hotels. It is worth the short walk to a wonderful dinner □



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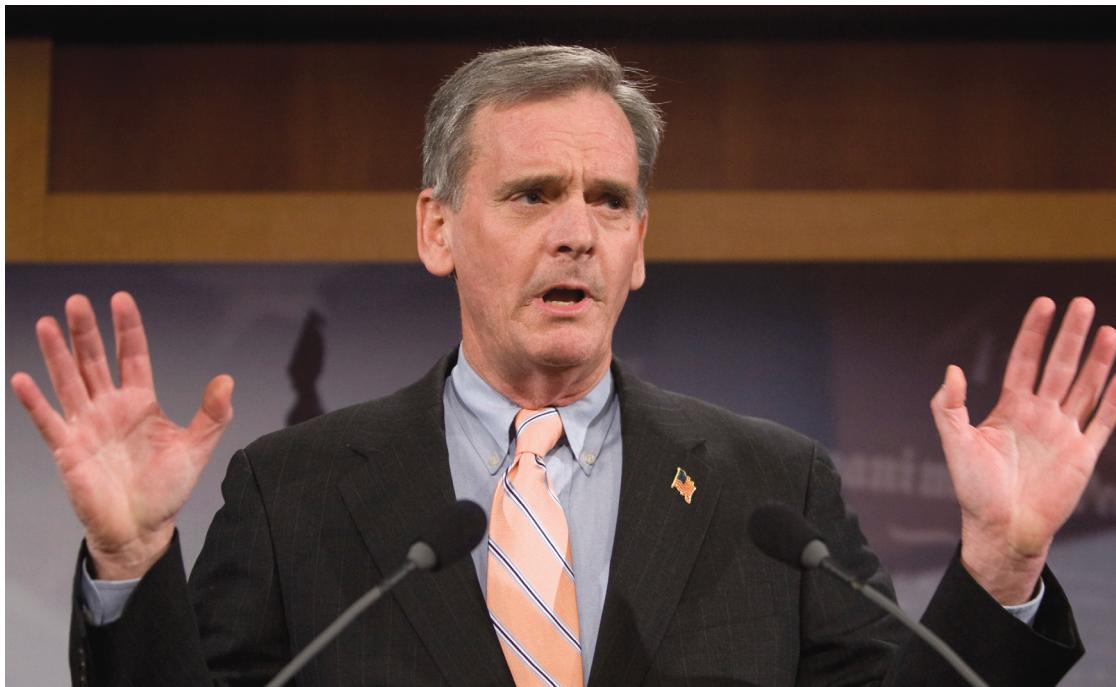
## Gregg withdraws as commerce secretary nominee

By LIZ SIDOTI and DAVID ESPO

Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Saying, "I made a mistake," Republican Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire abruptly withdrew as commerce secretary nominee on Thursday and drew a testy reaction from the White House, suddenly coping with the third Cabinet withdrawal of Barack Obama's young presidency.

Gregg cited "irresolvable conflicts" with Obama's handling of the economic stimulus and 2010 census in a statement released without warning by his Senate office. Later, at a news conference in the Capitol, he sounded more contrite.



Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., announces that he will withdraw from his nomination as commerce secretary Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009 in Washington.

Associated Press

"The president asked me to do it," he said of the job offer. "I said, 'Yes.' That was my mistake."

Obama offered a somewhat different account from Gregg. "It comes as something of a surprise, because the truth, you know, Mr. Gregg approached us with interest and seemed enthusiastic," Obama said in an interview with the Springfield (Ill.) Journal-Register.

"But ultimately, I think, we're going to just keep on making efforts to build the kind of bipartisan consensus around important issues that I think the American people are looking for."

Continued on Page B4

## From kids to Obama, nation marks Abe Lincoln's 200th

By JOHN O'CONNOR

Associated Press Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Folksy, melancholy Abraham Lincoln would have been dumbfounded by the fuss over his birthday Thursday.

Bells tolled, wreaths were laid, speeches intoned and banjos picked to mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth in a Kentucky log cabin. At the Lincoln presidential museum in Springfield, hundreds of excited schoolchildren joined in reciting the 16th president's Gettysburg Address — an attempt

to break the record for the biggest worldwide crowd reading it aloud together.

"I got up at 4:30 this morning to be here!" said Emma Bradford, a 9-year-old fourth-grader from the Chicago suburb of Barrington. "Abraham Lincoln is my idol."

Bookended by a log cabin and a replica White House, Lincoln impersonator Michael Krebs of Chicago and Gov. Pat Quinn led the reading of the famed speech. Officials hoped 300,000 Abe fans around the world would join in to break the record of 223,363.

Continued on Next Page



President Barack Obama puts his hand to his heart during the Pledge of Allegiance at the 102nd Abraham Lincoln Association banquet in Springfield, Ill., Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009.

Associated Press

## Winds knock out power to thousands on East Coast



By POLLY ANDERSON

Associated Press Writer

Wild winds with gusts topping 60 mph blew from the Great Lakes to the East Coast on

Thursday, knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of customers, disrupting travel and killing at least five people. The high winds, attributed to

a strong low pressure system, started Wednesday night and moved east overnight, kicking up gravel and sand from construction sites and hurling garbage cans onto busy New York City streets on Thursday.

"I got more sand in my eyes than a beach, and I almost got blown over backwards," said electrician Michael Lazzaro,

who ducked into a bar on his way home from work in New York.

Utilities such as Jersey Central Power & Light in New Jersey reported downed power lines from wind-snapped trees. About 250,000 customers remained without power Thursday in Pennsylvania, and 140,000 more in Ohio. There were also about 109,000

outages in West Virginia, more than 35,000 in New Jersey and 14,900 in Michigan.

"This is one of the largest power outages we've seen in many years," said Jimmy Gianato, West Virginia's director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. At one point, 220,000 customers were without power.

Continued on Page B5



# Changes in the water bill of W.E.B. Aruba N.V. concerning the bill of January 2009



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**Number di cliente** 10829870      **Number di percela** 25963-00

Number de parcela : 25963-00  
Number de cliente : 10829870  
Number de referencia : 1259768  
Periodo de cuenta : jun 2008  
Ultimo dia pa paga : 14 aug, 2008  
PERIODO ACTUAL : ← AWG 242.25  
CMB : 28515701

Fecha	Dianan	consumo m <sup>3</sup>
07/02/2008	29	22
06/03/2008	31	40
05/03/2008	30	49
04/03/2008	30	40
03/04/2008	28	37
02/05/2008	33	44
01/03/2008	30	38
12/04/2007	31	33
11/03/2007	31	38
Number meter		3468786
Stand meter		458

SALDO ANTERIOR		1323.75	} *
PAGO		745.80 CR	
SALDO PERIODO ANTERIOR			
<b>Specificacion</b>	<b>jun 2008</b>		
Consumo 1	3 m <sup>3</sup> @ AWG 4.55	13.65	
Consumo 2	3 m <sup>3</sup> @ AWG 5.40	16.20	
Consumo 3	6 m <sup>3</sup> @ AWG 7.55	45.30	
Consumo 4	8 m <sup>3</sup> @ AWG 16.10	128.80	
Consumo Adicional	2 m <sup>3</sup> @ AWG 18.65	37.30	
Huur di meter		1.00	
			577.95

Tarifa A  
Deposito AWG 80.00

Debe de periodo actual

Debe cu no t'a inclui e periodo actual

Ultimo dia pa paga 14 aug 2008
Periodo di cuenta Jun 2008
Total periodo actual AWG.242.25

\* If you paid the amount "periodo anterior" you owe the "periodo actual"

Here you can see the debt of previous period(s), what has been paid already and adjustments

performances of Lincoln's great speeches. In Owensboro, Ky., the president's life was set to bluegrass in the style of another famous native son, musician Bill Monroe.

At Gilson Brown Elementary School in the Mississippi River town of Alton, where one of Lincoln's game-changing 1858 senatorial debates with Stephen Douglas took place, students signed a monstrous pro-Lincoln banner in the cafeteria.

The U.S. Senate approved a resolution honoring Lincoln, and Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., urged Americans to “draw on Lincoln’s legacy and move forward” during this time of economic turmoil.

President Barack Obama, speaking in Washington, urged Americans to remember Lincoln's message of putting national unity above political differences.

"I feel a special gratitude to this singular figure who in so many ways made my own story possible — and in so many ways made America's story possible," Obama said

before heading to Springfield, where he and Lincoln both served as state legislators, for a celebratory banquet. Obama wasn't the only person to note a personal connection to Lincoln.

"We want to let everyone know what Abraham Lincoln did," said 13-year-old Nate Ryan at St. Clement School in Chicago, where Lincoln won the Republican nomination for president in 1860. "He was kinda curious. Seems kinda like me." □





## NOTICE:

Casino chips with old Aruba Marriott Sail Boat Logo can be cashed out at the Casino Cage until July 1, 2009.

No chip exchange is possible after July 1, 2009

## Gay couples protest at marriage bureaus across U.S.

By LISA LEFF and VERENA DOBNIK

Associated Press Writers

SAN FRANCISCO — Same-sex couples seeking to wed showed up at marriage license counters nationwide Thursday to highlight a right they don't have in 48 states, part of an annual protest that took on renewed urgency given recent election setbacks.

In San Francisco, where same-sex marriage was legal for nearly five months last year before California voters approved a ban, many couples who came to City Hall had already tied the knot but wanted to express their gratitude and to show they're still part of the fight.

"All of our marriages are under the cloud of Proposition 8," said Stuart Gaffney, 45, referring to California's ballot initiative banning gay marriage. "Equality is an unfinished business in California."

In Las Vegas, couples gathered outside the downtown marriage bureau with signs that read "Don't hate my love" and "No laws on love."

In New York, activists wore signs that said "Just Not Married." They were turned away empty-handed in both places when they asked for marriage licenses.

"We could get married in Massachusetts or Connecticut, but we'll wait a little and see what happens in New York," Matt Flanders, 37, of Brooklyn, said after he and his partner, Will Jennings, 29, participated in the protest in Manhattan. "It's a matter of principle. This is our home, and we should be able to get married where we live, where our friends are."

The protests around Valentine's Day, part of the 12th annual Freedom to Marry Day, were considered especially important this year because they come after the November passage of Proposition 8. The measure has prompted protests, lawsuits and questions about the direction of the gay rights movement.

"A lot of people feel a sense of

determination and regret over having been too complacent or quiet before, so there is a commitment to, 'Never again, we have to take action,'" said Evan Wolfson, a civil rights lawyer who conceived Freedom to Marry Day. "In that sense, California was a terrific energizer and wake-up call."

Currently, gay marriage is legal only in Massachusetts and Connecticut, while 30 states have gay marriage bans in their constitutions. Gay rights activists are pressing lawmakers in New Jersey, New York and Vermont to take up bills that would legalize same-sex marriage in those states.

Jennifer Pizer, director of the marriage project at gay rights legal group Lambda Legal, said the disappointing outcome of the California election has created momentum in other parts of the country.

Hawaii's House of Representatives, for example, voted 33-17 Thursday to allow same-sex civil unions. The legislation now goes before the state's Senate Judiciary Committee, where the vote is split among six senators, with one undecided. A tie vote would kill the civil union measure for the year.

In Utah, where a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2004 prohibits same-sex unions, five gay and lesbian couples applied for marriage licenses in Salt Lake City on Thursday. County Clerk Sherrie Swensen said she could recall only one other gay couple asking to get married over the last 18 years.

In Maine and Minnesota on Thursday, dozens of proponents of gay marriage gathered outside the statehouses to lobby for bills that would legalize same-sex marriage in those states. Under a black and white banner that read "Legalize Love," Minnesota lawmakers vowed to push the bill as far as they can.

State Sen. Scott Dibble, a Minneapolis Democrat who is one of the few openly gay members of the Legislature, said the country's economic woes showed the need for couples to support each other. But gay couples can't get many of the benefits of marriage that might make things easier, he said. "Those with strong families more than anyone are going to be able to rely on each other," Dibble said. "So why does our own government try to stop that from happening? Why does our



**Micah Stanek, left, and Mitch Day, of New York, to attempt to apply for a marriage license at the Manhattan Marriage Bureau, Thursday Feb. 12, 2009. Activists geared up for rallies at marriage bureaus or county clerks' offices in communities large and small — including Arkansas, California, Florida, Kentucky and Nevada, part of the 12th annual Freedom to Marry Week.**

Associated Press

own government try to stop us from trying to take care of each other?"

Troy Smith, 41, and his partner of six years, Justin Gibson, 26, were among the 15 couples waiting with tourists outside the marriage bureau in downtown Las Vegas. Smith, a coordinator at a local wedding chapel, said he's constantly faced with the reality of Nevada's constitutional ban on gay marriage.

"I sell it every day, but I can't buy

it myself," he said, adding that he often sees couples rushing to the altar after knowing each other for hours. "It just about breaks my heart. It's not fair." The California Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments next month on whether to uphold Proposition 8 and on the validity of the estimated 18,000 same-sex marriages sanctioned in the state between June and November. The court could render a decision as early as June. □

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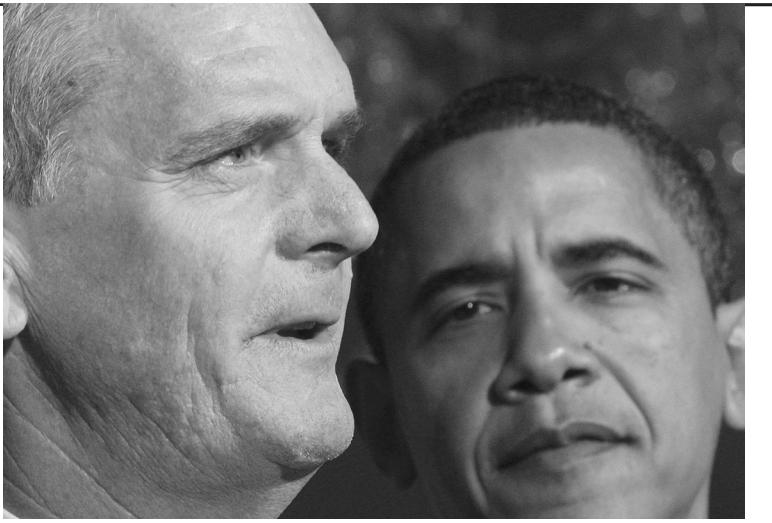
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In this Feb. 3, 2009 file photo, President Barack Obama listens to Sen. Judd Gregg, a New Hampshire Republican, speak, after the president announced Gregg as his choice for commerce secretary in the Grand Foyer of the White House in Washington. Gregg has withdrawn his nomination to become President Barack Obama's commerce secretary.

*Associated Press*

#### GREGG

*Continued from Page B1*

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said once it became clear Gregg was not going to support some of Obama's top economic priorities, it became necessary for Gregg and the administration "to part ways," Gibbs said. "We regret that he has had a change of heart."

Gregg said he'd always been a strong fiscal conservative. "It really wasn't a good pick." When the Senate voted on the president's massive stimulus plan earlier this week, Gregg did not vote. The bill passed

with all Democratic votes and just three Republican votes.

The unexpected withdrawal marked the latest setback for Obama in his attempt to build a Cabinet. It came as the new president expended political capital in Washington — and around the country — for his economic package.

Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner was confirmed despite revelations that he had not paid some of his taxes on time, and former Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle withdrew as nominee as health and human services secretary in a

tax controversy.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico was Obama's first choice as Commerce Secretary. He withdrew several weeks ago following disclosure that a grand jury is investigating allegations of wrongdoing in the awarding of contracts in his state. Richardson has not been implicated personally.

Gregg was one of three Republicans Obama had put in his Cabinet to emphasize his campaign pledge that he would be an agent of bipartisan change.

White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel said Obama and Gregg met in the Oval Office on Wednesday and there were no hard feelings.

"It's better we figured this out now than later," Emanuel said. "It's unfortunate. ... There's a disappointment."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Gregg said, "For 30 years, I've been my own person in charge of my own views, and I guess I hadn't really focused on the job of working for somebody else and carrying their views, and so this is basically where it came out."

Gregg, 61, said he informed the White House "fairly early in

the week" about his decision. He said he changed his mind after realizing he wasn't ready to "trim my sails" to be a part of Obama's team.

"I just sensed that I was not going to be good at being anything other than myself," he said.

The New Hampshire senator also said he would probably not run for a new term in 2010.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, said he wished Gregg "had thought through the implications of his nomination more thoroughly before accepting this post."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., called Gregg a friend and said, "I respect his decision."

In his statement, Gregg said his withdrawal had nothing to do with the vetting into his past that Cabinet officials routinely undergo.

Gregg's reference to the stimulus underscored the partisan divide over the centerpiece of Obama's economic recovery plan. Conservatives in both houses have been relentless critics of the plan, arguing it is filled with wasteful spending and won't create enough jobs. Gregg has refrained from voting on the bill — and on

all other matters — while his nomination was pending.

The Commerce Department has jurisdiction over the Census Bureau, and the administration recently took steps to assert greater control. Republicans have harshly criticized the decision, saying it was an attempt to politicize the once-in-a-decade event.

The outcome of the census has deep political implications, since congressional districts are drawn based on population. Many federal funds are distributed on the basis of population, as well.

Both of those factors mean there is a premium on counting as many residents as possible. Historically, the groups believed to be most undercounted are inner-city minorities, who tend to vote Democratic. Gregg's announcement also undid a carefully constructed chain of events.

The New Hampshire senator had agreed to join the Cabinet only if his departure from the Senate did not allow Democrats to take control of his seat.

New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch, in turn, pledged to appointed Bonnie Newman, a former interim president of the University of New Hampshire. She, in turn, had agreed not to run for a full term in 2010, creating an open seat for Democrats to try and claim.

In a statement, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said Gregg "made a principled decision to return and we're glad to have him."

Lynch, who spoke to Gregg several hours before the announcement, said he respected Gregg's decision to withdraw and remain in the Senate. He thanked Newman for her willingness to serve.

A day after Gregg's nomination had been announced, the AP reported that a former staffer was under criminal investigation for allegedly taking baseball and hockey tickets from a lobbyist in exchange for legislative favors while working for Gregg.

The former staffer, Kevin Koonce, has been identified in court papers only as "Staffer F" in the sprawling corruption probe stemming from disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

Gregg said at the time that he had been told he was neither a subject nor target of the investigation, and would cooperate fully. □



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**Women's hair is blown by strong winds in lower Manhattan, in New York Thursday Feb. 12, 2009. Wild winds with gusts topping 60 mph blew from the Great Lakes to the East Coast Thursday, knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of customers, disrupting travel and killing at least two people.**

*Associated Press*

#### **WINDS**

#### **Continued from Page B1**

At least six state parks also had no electricity.

Utilities in Ohio and West Virginia said electricity wouldn't be restored to some residents until the weekend or later.

In New Jersey, a 61-year-old motorist was killed early Thursday in Union County when a tree snapped, crashing through her car's windshield and impaling the woman. A woman in Newark died of massive head injuries after a tree branch fell and struck her Thursday afternoon. Another woman attending her brother's wake in West Virginia was struck and killed by debris when the church's gymnasium collapsed Wednesday night.

A 35-year-old truck driver also died Wednesday night near Columbus, Ohio, when wind knocked a semitrailer into his truck. Police said three other semitrailers were knocked over by wind Wednesday night, injuring one of the drivers.

Wind also was believed to be a factor in the death of a 59-year-old New York City construction worker who was killed when a wall collapsed, officials said.

A downed power line forced the closure of Interstate 90 west of Erie, Pa., for three hours on Thursday morning. The wind also disrupted the morning rail commute in the New York City area, and four people were hurt, apparently by flying glass, when the wind blew a crossing gate into a Long Island Rail Road train. The National Weather Service reported a wind gust of 92 mph in Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, but said most gusts in the region were no greater than 60 mph.

In Kentucky, devastated by a crippling ice storm two weeks ago, Public Service Commission spokesman Andrew Melnykovych said the wind caused at least 150,000 outages Wednesday. About 55,000 customers remained without power Thursday afternoon.

A 35-year-old utility worker from Minnesota fell 30 feet to his death Thursday while helping repair crews restore power in Kentucky. □

## **LA police to investigate threats to octuplet mom**

**By SHAYA TAYEFE  
MOHAJER**

**Associated Press Writer**

LOS ANGELES – Police said Thursday they will investigate death threats against octuplet mother Nadya Suleman and advise her publicist on how to handle a torrent of other nasty messages that have flooded his office.

Word that the 33-year-old single, unemployed mother is receiving public assistance to care for the 14 children she conceived through in vitro fertilization has stoked furor among many people.

Police Lt. John Romero said officers were meeting with Suleman's publicist Mike Furtney about the flood of angry phone calls and e-mail messages against Suleman, her children and Furtney.

"We are aware of the media accounts of the threats, and that they are being sent to the West Los Angeles detectives for appropriate action," Romero said.

Furtney said 500 new e-mails were received early Thursday. "We're talking to the Los Angeles Police Department to get their best advice as to how to regard these messages," he said as the phone in his office rang constantly.

He is also consulting with a security professional to get advice on any precautions that might need to be taken.

Suleman is living in an undisclosed location and spends time with all her



**This image provided by NBC shows Nadya Suleman, left, speaking with Ann Curry in New York on Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009, in Suleman's first interview since giving birth to octuplets last week. The interview is planned to be broadcast on the "Today" show on Monday, Feb. 9 and "Dateline" on Tuesday, Feb. 10.**

*Associated Press*

kids every day, Furtney said. The octuplets are expected to remain in the hospital for several more weeks.

Not all the calls have been angry.

One family from the Midwest has invited Suleman and her brood to live on their farm, Furtney said.

"One thing that keeps me from jumping out the window is that we've heard from many people offering some kind of support: clothing, food, financial or other help," he said.

Suleman has been supporting her six other children with \$490 a month in food stamps and receives Social Security disability payments for three of the youngsters that could total \$2,379 a month.

She has estimated her in vitro fertilization procedures have

cost \$100,000.

Suleman has said she saved for the treatments by working double shifts and also used money from a disability award exceeding \$165,000 that she received after an on-the-job back injury.

The benefits were discontinued last year.

The Suleman octuplets' medical costs have not been disclosed, but in 2006, the average cost for a premature baby's hospital stay in California was \$164,273, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Eight times that equals \$1.3 million.

For a single mother, the cost of raising 14 children through age 17 ranges from \$1.3 million to \$2.7 million, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. □

# Pope tells Jewish leaders he will visit Israel

By VICTOR L. SIMPSON

Associated Press Writer

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI told American Jewish leaders Thursday

In this photo provided by the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, Pope Benedict XVI, center, receives a gift from Rabbi Arthur Schneier, senior Rabbi at Park East Synagogue in New York, left, and Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, on the occasion of an audience with about 60 American Jewish leaders, at the Vatican, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009.

Associated Press



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that he plans to visit Israel in May, coupling the long-awaited announcement with his strongest condemnation of Holocaust denial. The 81-year-old pope assured the group that the Catholic Church was "profoundly and irrevocably committed to reject all anti-Semitism," helping to ease Jewish furor that followed

the pope's reinstatement of an ultraconservative bishop who questioned the extent of the Holocaust. "Such warmth, with an outstretched hand," said New York Rabbi Arthur Schneier, a Holocaust survivor, after the audience in the frescoed Consistory Hall. "The visit is on, no hesitation, reservations."

There has been only one other official visit by a pope to the Jewish state. Both sides said it will take place in May.

The trip, talked about since the start of the German pope's papacy in 2005, has been up in the air for some time due to problems raised by both sides. The latest jolt came when Benedict last month lifted the excommunications of four ultraconservative bishops -- one of whom denied that Jews were gassed by the Nazis during World War II.

Protests by Jews, the pope's own bishops in Germany and German Chancellor Angela Merkel led the Vatican to demand the bishop recant, easing tensions and leading to Thursday's meeting with more than 60 representatives of American Jewish organizations.

Addressing the group in English as they sat in chairs before him, Benedict called the slaughter of 6 million Jews a crime against God.

The Vatican said Benedict did not know about the views of Bishop Richard Williamson when he agreed to lift the excommunication, but he clearly referred to him Thursday.

"The hatred and contempt for men, women and children that was manifested in the Shoah was a crime against God and against humanity," Benedict

told the visiting leaders, using the Hebrew term for the Holocaust. "This should be clear to everyone, especially to those standing in the tradition of the Holy Scriptures."

Jewish leaders applauded his comments, most saying the crisis with the church over Williamson's comments was over.

"We came here with heavy hearts because of recent events, but we came away pleased and honored by the words of His Holiness," Malcolm Hoenlein, vice president of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, told reporters.

Abraham Foxman, a Holocaust survivor and the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said the Vatican should communicate Williamson again because of his remarks.

"Every moment that he stays in the church gives him credibility," he told reporters after the meeting.

"Today's statement was important but it did not bring closure," he said. "You cannot condemn Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism and reinstate someone who to this day continues to be an anti-Semite and deny the Holocaust."

In an interview with Swedish state TV broadcast Jan. 21, Williamson said only about 200,000 to 300,000 Jews were killed, none of them gassed.

Williamson has apologized for causing distress to the pope, but has not recanted. He said he would correct himself if he is satisfied by the evidence, but insisted in an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel that examining it "will take time."

Benedict's trip had been planned before the Williamson affair surfaced.

Pope John Paul II made the first official visit in 2000, moving many when he prayed at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site. The only other visit by a pope, in 1964, reflected the strained nature of the relationship in those years.



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# Crash of U.S., Russian satellites a threat in space

By SETH BORENSTEIN and DOUGLAS BIRCH

Associated Press Writers

MOSCOW — U.S. and Russian officials traded shots Thursday over who was to blame for a huge satellite collision this week that spewed speeding clouds of debris into space, threatening other unmanned spacecraft in nearby orbits. The smashup 500 miles (800 kilometers) over Siberia on Tuesday involved a derelict Russian spacecraft designed for military communications and a working satellite owned by U.S.-based Iridium, which served commercial customers as well as the U.S. Department of Defense.

A prominent Russian space expert suggested NASA fell down on the job by not warning of the collision. But U.S. space experts said the Russian has the wrong agency.

The U.S. military tracks the 18,000 objects in orbit, monitoring only certain threats because it lacks the resources to do everything, said Maj. Regina Winchester, spokeswoman for U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the military's Space Surveillance Network.

Iridium spokeswoman Elizabeth Mailander said the company can move any of its 65 satellites out of the way if it gets a precise warning ahead of a crash. Such a warning was not made Tuesday, Mailander said.

But the company has never redirected a satellite before because the warnings they get aren't precise enough and there are just too many satellites to be constantly rejigging their orbit, she said.

"Ours was where it was supposed to be and it was functioning," Mailander said. She said Iridium hasn't talked with Russian space officials. No one has any idea yet how many pieces of space junk were generated by the collision or how big they might be. But

the crash scattered space junk in orbits 300 to 800 miles (500 to 1,300 kilometers) above Earth, according to Maj.-Gen. Alexander Yakushin, chief of staff for the Russian military's Space Forces.

Experts in space debris will meet next week in Vienna at a U.N. seminar to come up with better ways to prevent future crashes, said NASA orbital debris program manager Nicholas Johnson.

Igor Lisov, a prominent Russian space expert, said Thursday he did not understand why NASA's debris experts and Iridium had failed to prevent the collision, since the Iridium satellite was active and its orbit could be adjusted.

"It could have been a computer failure or a human error," he said. "It also could be that they only were paying attention to smaller debris and ignoring the defunct satellites."

But that job belongs to the U.S. Department of Defense's Space Surveillance Network, which was created with NASA's help. The network's top priority is protecting astronauts — warning if there is a threat to the international space station or manned spacecraft. And it

gives NASA precise warnings for about a dozen satellites that could be maneuvered out of the way, something that happens once in a while, Johnson said.

There are 800 to 1,000 active satellites in orbit and about 17,000 pieces of debris and dead satellites, like the Russian one, that can't be controlled, he said. The U.S. space tracking network doesn't have the resources to warn all satellite operators of every possible close call, Johnson and Winchester said.

"It's unfortunate that we cannot predict all of the collisions all of the time," said Winchester.

A private Web site, named Socrates, does give daily risk of crash warnings for satellites and Iridium, with 65 satellites, frequently in the top 10 daily risks, Johnson said.

However, the Iridium satellite wasn't on Tuesday's warning list, he said.

Lisov said the debris may threaten a large number of earth-tracking and weather satellites in similar orbits.

"There is a quite a lot of satellites in nearby orbits," he told The Associated Press. "The other 65 Iridium satellites in similar orbits will face the most serious risk, and there numerous earth-



This image provided by NASA shows an artist concept of an Iridium satellite in earth orbit. Two big communications satellites collided in the first-ever crash of its kind in orbit over Siberia Tuesday Feb. 10, 2009, shooting out a pair of massive debris clouds and posing a slight risk to the international space station. The collision involved an Iridium commercial satellite, which was launched in 1997, and a Russian satellite launched in 1993 and believed to be nonfunctioning.

Associated Press

tracking and weather satellites in nearby orbits. Fragments may trigger a chain of collisions."

Both the U.S. surveillance network and Russian Space Forces are tracking the debris, believed to be traveling at speeds of around 200 meters — or about 660 feet — per second.

NASA said it would take weeks to know the full magnitude of the crash, but both NASA and Russia's Roscosmos agencies

said there was little risk to the international space station and its three crew members.

Russian Mission Control spokesman Valery Lyndin noted the station's orbit has been adjusted in the past to dodge space debris.

The space junk also is unlikely to pose a threat to the space shuttle set to launch Feb. 22 with seven astronauts, U.S. officials said, although that issue will be reviewed. □

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# Report: Hamas says agreement on long-term truce

By SALAH NASRAWI

Associated Press Writer

CAIRO – The deputy leader of Hamas said Thursday night that the Islamic militant group agreed to an 18-month truce with Israel for the Gaza Strip, the official Egyptian news agency reported.

Moussa Abu Marzouk told MENA that Egypt's government, which has been mediating between Hamas and Israel, would announce the truce in two days after consulting with other Palestinian factions.

In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office said the Israeli government had no comment on the report.

Earlier in the day, Egyptian and Hamas officials reported progress in truce talks, which included Hamas' strongman from Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, and Egypt's top mediator, intelligence chief Omar Suleiman.

Egyptian diplomats have been working as go-betweens to try to arrange a truce deal between Hamas and Israel to solidify a cease-fire that ended Israel's devastating 22-day offensive in Gaza last month. Hamas and Israel refuse to negotiate directly.

Marzouk told MENA that the Egyptian-brokered deal it agreed to calls for Israel to reopen six border crossings into the Gaza Strip.

Hamas leaders centered its truce demands on a reopening of the tiny coastal territory's borders, which have been largely sealed by Egypt and Israel since Hamas gunmen seized control in Gaza in 2007.

Israel, in turn, insisted that any cease-fire must include an end to militants firing rockets from Gaza into southern Israel and a halt to Hamas arms smuggling.

In talking to MENA, Marzouk did not discuss details. But

earlier Thursday he told Al-Jazeera television that Egypt had previously agreed to work with Israel to forge new arrangements for reopening Gaza's crossing into Egypt. Marzouk said a deal for the release of a captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit held in Gaza would be negotiated later, according to MENA.

**German president of the European Parliament, Hans Gert Poettering welcomes Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas left, Wednesday Feb 4, 2009 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. Abbas says the Israeli attacks on Gaza were war crimes and Israeli officials should be held accountable.**

*Associated Press*

Egypt has been trying to broker a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas. Hamas is holding Shalit, who was abducted more than two years ago in a cross-border raid from Gaza into southern Israel.

Besides mediating a truce for Gaza, Egypt also is trying to bring Hamas and its Palestinian rival, President Mahmoud Abbas, into talks on reconciling and forming a unity government that can move ahead with peace negotiations with Israel. Egypt hopes to host a reconciliation conference Feb. 22.

An Egyptian security official said Egypt had arrested a Palestinian who sneaked into Egypt through a tunnel from Gaza and was trying to purchase weapons in Egypt. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, said the man and two Egyptians who were sheltering him were arrested in the coastal city of El-Arish on Wednesday. □



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# U.S. Navy seizes 9 suspected pirates in Gulf of Aden



**U.S. Marines transfer suspected pirates, seated, to a processing area on the USNS Lewis and Clark in the Gulf of Aden, Thursday Feb. 12, 2009. The U.S. Navy Wednesday seized seven suspected pirates in the Gulf of Aden after a merchant ship sent a distress call saying gunmen had tried to board it from a skiff.**

By ANDREW NJUGUNA

Associated Press Writer

ABOARD THE USNS LEWIS AND CLARK — The U.S. Navy apprehended suspected pirates Thursday for a second consecutive day in the Gulf of Aden, a treacherous waterway between Somalia and Yemen where international forces have been battling pirates preying on commercial vessels.

The high-seas action came as a Ukrainian cargo ship laden with tanks and heavy weapons, which Somali pirates released

last week after holding it for more than four months, docked at a Kenyan port.

The Navy said it responded Thursday to a distress signal from the Indian-flagged vessel Premdivya which said it was fired upon by men in a skiff who were trying to board their vessel. In a statement from the 5th Fleet's Bahrain headquarters, the Navy said a helicopter from the USS Vella Gulf fired two warning shots at the suspected pirates to stop them fleeing. U.S. forces

searched the skiff and found weapons including rocket-propelled grenades, then took nine suspected pirates aboard the American ship.

Officials were gathering evidence on the incident and may hand the suspects to Kenyan authorities for prosecution, Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said. The United States agreed last month to hand pirate suspects to the east African nation.

On Wednesday, the same

*Associated Press*

American ship detained seven other suspected pirates — the Navy's first arrests since it established an anti-piracy task force this year.

Those suspects, armed with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades, had tried to board the Marshall Islands-flagged vessel Polaris using a ladder from their skiff.

The seven were transferred via helicopter to the USNS Lewis and Clark on Thursday. They will eventually be handed to Kenya, according to Lt. Nathan Christensen, a spokesman for the 5th Fleet. Associated Press Television News footage showed some of the men, handcuffed and wearing leg shackles and white jumpsuits, being escorted from helicopters onto the ship.

They were given a meal, a blanket, a towel and a bar of soap, but they were not allowed to talk to each other. U.S. forces assisted by a translator were trying to get information from the men, such as their ages and nationalities.

The men were then taken to a holding area surrounded by razor wire where they were watched by U.S. forces.

Pirates, mostly from lawless Somalia, have become an increasing problem in the region. Last year, pirates seeking multimillion-dollar ransoms attacked 111 ships in the Gulf of Aden and seized 42 of them, including the Ukrainian ship, the MV Faina.

That vessel docked at Mombasa on Thursday. The ship's captain had died of a suspected heart attack during the kidnapping.

"It is very difficult to express our feelings because the voyage is too hard for everybody," the acting captain, Viktor Nikolsky, said in broken English during brief comments to journalists at the

docks. The 20 Russian and Ukrainian crew members were then whisked away for medical checks, and were expected to be flown back to Ukraine on Saturday.

The Ukrainian ship's capture sparked a diplomatic spat; while Kenya had said the weapons belonged to Nairobi, a Kenyan maritime official and several foreign diplomats said the weapons were destined for southern Sudan.

The allegations embarrassed Kenya, which had helped broker a peace deal between northern Sudan's government and the oil-rich south in 2005, ending a 21-year civil war. Officials repeated Thursday that the tanks had been bound for Kenya.

"We have nothing to hide," Kenyan government spokesman Alfred Mutua told the banks of TV cameras assembled at the docks.

MV Faina's ordeal began in September, when scores of heavily armed Somali pirates swarmed onboard as it carried 33 Soviet-designed tanks and crates of small arms headed to Kenya. Foreign governments had feared the Faina's weapons might fall into the hands of Somali insurgents who the U.S. State Department says are linked to al-Qaida.

In an effort to stop the pirates and protect commercial shipping, warships from a number of countries including the United States, India, Britain, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Korea have sent ships to the area.

Somalia has not had a functioning government since warlords overthrew dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, then turning on each other and reducing the Horn of Africa nation to anarchy and chaos.

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# Police: drug turf battles near Mexico's capital

By MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press Writer

MEXICO CITY — Drug cartels that have waged bloody turf battles across Mexico's border region have now brought their fight to the outskirts of Mexico City, federal police said Thursday in announcing the arrest of 10 alleged members of an armed hit squad.

The eight men and two women arrested Wednesday were allegedly working for the Sinaloa-based Beltran Leyva cartel and had been hired to attack the rival La Familia cartel, which has allegedly moved into the capital from the nearby state of Michoacan.

"It is clear that these two gangs, the two cartels, are already on the outskirts of Mexico City," said acting federal police Commissioner Rodrigo Esparza, adding "there is a war between these two criminal gangs for the territory."

The 10 suspects were arrested in the township of Tultitlan, on the northern outskirts of one of the world's largest cities. They worked for Edgar Valdez Villarreal, alias "Barbie," the reputed chief hit man for the Beltran Leyva cartel, Esparza said. Earlier, police had

arrested 13 heavily armed members of the La Familia cartel in the same area. The two gangs are apparently fighting for control of trafficking routes as well as local drug sales, he said.

While cartel hitmen have carried out selective assassinations in Mexico City and some cartel operators have been arrested here, the city has been largely spared the raging gunbattles that claimed the lives of more than 6,000 people in Mexico last year.

The bodies of 24 men were found bound with duct tape and shot in the head last year in a rural area outside Mexico City. Authorities believe the killings stemmed from a territorial dispute between cartels. Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina has said at least 17 of the victims were identified as bricklayers who had been recruited into drug dealing.

Also Thursday, a Mexican judge ordered a former federal police official to stand trial on charges that he protected drug traffickers.

The judge found enough evidence to proceed with the case against former regional police coordinator Javier Herrera, who was arrested earlier this



A suspected member of a crime gang, allegedly extorting, kidnapping and drug trafficking in the outskirts of Mexico's capital, is taken off a police vehicle to be shown to the press in Mexico City, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009.

Associated Press

month on organized-crime and drug charges, the Attorney General's Office said in a statement.

Herrera allegedly received \$35,000 twice a month from traffickers in the northern state of Tamaulipas and helped smugglers in southern Guerrero

state, where he was in charge of the federal police, authorities said.

Last year, Herrera accused top federal police officials of incompetence and mismanagement and had since been dismissed. He is being held in a federal prison in western Nayarit state. □



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## At Papillon Restaurant in The Village Henri Charrière would have had the time of his life



PALM BEACH - Henri Charrière, one of the world's most famous prisoners, would surely have had the time of his life at Papillon Restaurant in The Village, across from the Radisson Resort. Nicknamed Papillon because of the butterfly tattoo on his chest, the Frenchman was the first convict to escape from Devil's Island, something that nobody had ever done before. Charrière's thrilling, gripping autobiography has been the concept behind Papillon Restaurant. The décor, the decorations and especially the restrooms wink

at the thirteen terrible years Papillon spent in prison in French Guyana.

Papillon Restaurant's menu reflects the Frenchman's arduous journey to freedom: classic French dishes have been dusted with daring Caribbean flair and are a culinary journey for your taste buds. The spacious outside terrace is perfect for casual fine dining; the



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# When toddlers point a lot, more words will follow



This undated handout photo provided by the journal Science shows gesturing child. Don't just talk to your toddler, gestures, too. Pointing, waving bye-bye and other natural gestures seem to boost a budding vocabulary.

(AP Photo/Science, Meredith Rowe)

By LAURAN NEERGAARD,  
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — Don't just talk to your toddler — gesture, too. Pointing, waving bye-bye and other natural gestures seem to boost a budding vocabulary. Scientists found those tots who could convey more meaning with gestures at age 14 months went on to have a richer vocabulary as they prepared

to start kindergarten. And intriguingly, whether a family is poor or middle class plays a role, the researchers report Friday. Anyone who's ever watched a tot perform the arms-raised "pick me up now" demand knows that youngsters figure out how to communicate well before they can talk. Gesturing also seems to be an important

precursor to forming sentences, as children start combining one word plus a gesture for a second word.

University of Chicago researchers wondered if gesturing also played a role in a serious problem: Children from low-income families start school with smaller vocabularies than their better-off classmates. It's a gap that tends to persist as the students age. In fact, kindergarten vocabulary is a predictor of how well youngsters ultimately fare in school.

One big key to a child's vocabulary is how their parents talked to them from babyhood on. Previous research has shown that higher-income, better-educated parents tend to talk and read more to small children, and to use more varied vocabulary and complex syntax.

Do those parents also gesture more as they talk with and teach their children?

To see, university psychology researchers Susan Goldin-Meadow and Meredith Rowe visited the homes of

50 Chicago-area families of varying socioeconomic status who had 14-month-olds. They videotaped for 90 minutes to count both parents' and children's words and gestures. Quantity aside, they also counted whether children made gestures with specific meanings.

This is not baby sign-language; parents weren't formally training their tots. Instead, they used everyday gestures to point something out or illustrate a concept. A child points to a dog and mom says, "Yes, that's a dog." Or dad flaps his arms to mimic flying. Or pointing illustrates less concrete concepts like "up" or "down" or "big."

The researchers found an income gap with gesturing even in toddlerhood, when children speak few words.

Higher-income parents did gesture more and, more importantly, their children on average produced 25 meanings in gesture during that 90-minute session, compared with an average of 13 among poorer children, they reported in the journal Science.

Then the researchers returned to test vocabulary comprehension at age 4 1/2. The poorer children scored worse, by about 24 points. Researchers blamed mostly socioeconomic status and parents' speech, but said gesturing contributed, too.

It's not just that richer parents gesture more, stressed Peggy McCardle of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, which funded the work.

"It's that there's a greater variety of types of gesture that would signal different types of meaning," McCardle said. "It sure looks like the kids are learning that and it's given them kind of a leg-up."

The study doesn't prove gesturing leads to better word-learning, but it's a strong hint. Now scientists wonder if encouraging low-income parents to gesture more could translate to toddlers who do, too, and in turn improve school readiness.

"It wouldn't hurt to encourage parents to talk more and gesture more," Rowe said. □



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# Obama buys time for zombie banks

By the Monitor's Editorial Board

Faced with a choice between spending upwards of \$4 trillion to save wobbly banks or doing something else, President Obama has decided to do something else. His bank plan, rolled out Tuesday, almost seems designed to simply buy time in hopes the economy bottoms out soon. Maybe then, hard decisions about who sacrifices – taxpayers or financiers – won't be needed.

That explains why the plan, drafted by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, is vague on details and merely broad in strategy – with the uncertainty over its real impact worrisome to business.

Under the plan, government would first send federal regulators into the opaque backrooms of the biggest banks like cave explorers to find the ultimate depth of bad assets, such as mortgage-backed securities. Banks are still trying not to admit those losses on their balance sheets and thus are reluctant to resume lending that

could revive the economy.

"Right now," Mr. Obama says, "part of the problem is that nobody really knows what's on the banks' books."

Second, the plan calls for Treasury and the Federal Reserve to invite private investors to buy those toxic assets at whatever price they can get them with a still-unspecified federal guarantee to make sure they don't lose their shirt in selling them later.

How big will that guarantee be? When asked about the potential losses in those bad assets that might be subsidized by taxpayers, Mr. Geithner could only answer: "It's the core of the problem."

Better candor came from Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke, who warned Congress that it should prepare to pay for a government takeover of some big financial institutions, such as happened last year with insurance giant AIG. Over the past year, 34 banks, mostly small ones, have failed – the fastest rate since the 1980s bank crisis. Nearly 200 more banks are on watch by the FDIC.

Some experts say hundreds more may fail in the next few years.

The Obama/Geithner plan only continues a deadlock with investors and banks by not being exact in how much government will spend to solve the banks' woes. With a Congress and Obama preferring to throw money at other things, such as the stimulus package, they are putting politics above the economy.

Mr. Geithner says he wants bold action, which Japan failed to do during its decade-long bank crisis of the 1990s. Yet the key negative lesson from Japan is that banks must not only quickly admit the size of their financial problems but government must also be resolute and clear on how much it will spend to solve them – or else let the banks dissolve. A game of chicken over who takes responsibility for bad debts only holds the US economy back. Obama needs to either let banks

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fail and pick up the pieces, or put a set amount of money behind the purchases of the banks' bad paper.

The recession will end when the market finds a bottom in both the

worth of banks and the value of homes. Government can't create an artificial bottom for either, but it can help markets find it faster. The Geithner plan has yet to do that. □

## Obama Suggests Stimulus Impact May Surpass Jobs Goal

Mike Memoli

Obama held a roundtable discussion with regional reporters at the White House yesterday, aiming to spread the White House's message about the stimulus plan through local media. The Q&A garnered big headlines in most of the target cities, as Obama talked not just about his recovery plan but a host of local issues.

Interestingly, he told the Philadelphia Inquirer that he thinks he may actually selling the impact of his proposal short, saying the ripple effect of some job-creating measures may lead to an undercounting of the final result. "You're probably not counting the fact that that teacher is still going to the dry cleaner down the street," Obama said. "I think the ripple effects of this package won't be entirely documentable, but I think it will be significant."

With the Columbus Dispatch and Dayton Daily News, Obama "sympathized" with the decisions being made by governors at the state level. Obama said the final legislation would save Ohio from draconian budget cuts. Obama: "Given what Gov. (Ted) Strickland is going through in Ohio ... we need to provide ample relief to the states."

Obama praised the role Maine's senators played in the Portland Press Herald, and said he's confident in getting more Republican support. Obama: "I think Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe are outstanding legislators who care about their state but who also care about this country. There are going to be times when Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe disagree with me, but they've been consistently thoughtful and I very much appreciate the efforts that they've put in."

He did the same with the Omaha World-Herald, saying that Ben Nelson has "been a very constructive partner in this process." Obama: "Without Ben, I'm not sure we get other votes." He also said some of the "scrubbing" done in the Senate made sense. "My bottom line has always been: Is it creating jobs? And this bill creates jobs. Is it providing relief to states? It's providing relief to states. Is it laying the foundation for long-term economic growth? It is."

Obama told Detroit's Free Press that he's waiting for commitments from auto industry executives before offering "serious help." "My message is, get me a plan," he said. "You know, if a plan is presented to us on 20 million [in] sales when we just know that's not going to happen, then we're going to have to ask them to go back to the drawing board," he said."

Obama told the Anchorage Daily News he would discuss the state's natural gas pipeline with Canada at his Feb. 19 meeting. □

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## SPORTS

## Aruba TODAY



In this Jan. 17, 2008 file photo, baseball commissioner Bud Selig addresses the media during a news conference in Scottsdale, Ariz. Selig says Alex Rodriguez has "shamed the game," though the commissioner indicated no plans to punish the three-time AL MVP.

Associated Press

## Bud Selig says Alex Rodriguez 'shamed the game'

By RONALD BLUM

AP Baseball Writer

TAMPA, Fla. — Bud Selig says Alex Rodriguez has "shamed the game," though the baseball commissioner indicated no plans to punish the three-time AL MVP. "I am saddened by the revelations," Selig said in a statement issued Thursday, four days after Rodriguez admitted he used unspecified drugs from 2001-03 while playing for the Texas Rangers. "What Alex did was wrong, and he will have to live with the damage he has done to his name and reputation."

Players and owners didn't agree to a joint drug program until August 2002, and testing with punishment didn't start until 2004.

"It is important to remember that these recent revelations relate to pre-program activity," Selig said. "Under our current drug program, if you are caught using steroids and/or amphetamines, you will be punished. Since 2005, every player who has tested positive for steroids has been suspended for as much as 50 games."

Continued on Page B19

### NHL Roundup

## Caps' Green ties goal mark in loss

By IRA PODELL  
AP Hockey Writer

NEW YORK — Mike Green isn't used to goalies keeping him from putting the puck in the net. So forgive him for being annoyed when a few first-period chances failed to get past Henrik Lundqvist. By the time the second period was over, the Washington Capitals' high-scoring defenseman had Lundqvist figured out, too, and forced his way into the NHL record book.

Green scored for the seventh straight game to tie the 25-year-old mark for defensemen and then added a second goal in the middle period. It wasn't enough as the Capitals fell to Lundqvist and the New York Rangers 5-4 in a shootout on Wednesday night.

Green put the Capitals in front 3-2 with a hard, rising wrister from just inside the top edge of the right circle at 10:32. That tied the record set by Boston's Mike O'Connell, who also scored in seven straight games during the 1983-84 season.

He got Washington even at 4 with 57.6 seconds left in the second period. Green celebrated both goals with emphatic slams against the glass in the Rangers zone. "I was pretty excited," said



Washington Capitals defenseman Mike Green (52) is followed by defenseman Jeff Schultz (55) as they return to the bench after Green scored in the second period of the Capitals' 5-4 shootout loss to the New York Rangers in an NHL hockey game at Madison Square Garden in New York, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009. Green tied the NHL record for consecutive games with a goal for a defenseman, at seven.

Associated Press

Green, who leads NHL defensemen with 21 goals and 49 points. "It was frustrating there. I had some chances in the first period, and I finally got one by him. I don't know

if you've seen my reaction, but I was pretty jacked.

"It was anger, emotion, happy, sad. I was pretty wound up." So were the Rangers when they finally snapped a season-high,

## Internal IRS probe of BALCO agent surfaces

By PAUL ELIAS

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The government's lead sports doping investigator and four other Internal Revenue Service agents have been cleared of any wrongdoing in a raid on the home of Barry Bonds' personal trainer.

When federal agents raided the home of Bonds' trainer, Greg Anderson, on Sept. 3, 2003, they seized \$63,920 from a safe and a drawer in his kitchen. Less than a month later, \$600 went missing, and several IRS agents, including BALCO investigator Jeff Novitzky, were placed under investigation.

According to court documents filed Thursday, the IRS' yearlong internal investigation concluded that "it did not identify who was responsible for taking the missing \$600."

But the investigation has become an issue in Bonds' upcoming trial and in the case of cyclist Tammy Thomas, who was convicted last year of lying to a grand jury when she denied using steroids. U.S. District Judge Susan Illston ordered prosecutors last week to turn over the 136-page IRS report to Bonds' attorneys. Whether they can or will use the report to cross examine Novitzky when he testifies for the government remains to be seen.

Bonds' lead attorney Allen Ruby declined comment.

Illston barred Thomas' attorney from questioning Novitzky about the investigation during her April 2008 trial. The judge ruled the raid on Anderson's house had nothing to do with the cyclist's case, though she said it might have been relevant in the original BALCO criminal case that charged Anderson, BALCO founder Victor Conte and two others with steroids dealing. Anderson, Conte and the others pleaded guilty in 2005 before their cases went to trial. Thomas' attorney Ethan Balogh recently was given a copy of the full report by the prosecution. □

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## NBA Roundup

# Pierce, Celtics spoil Paul's return to Hornets

By BRETT MARTEL

AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Paul Pierce more than made up for a thumb injury that sidelined Ray Allen and the foul trouble that limited Kevin Garnett. Pierce scored 30 points and the Boston Celtics spoiled Chris Paul's return from injury with an 89-77 victory over the New Orleans Hornets on Wednesday night.

"Night in and night out I don't know what the team is going to need from me," Pierce said. "Obviously my scoring was needed, so I had to step up. I just feel out the game, see how it's going and play from there."

Limited to less than 30 minutes after committing his fourth foul in the third quarter, Garnett still finished with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Eddie House scored eight of his 12 points in the final period to help Boston pull away for its eighth straight road win.

Paul, who'd missed four games with a right groin strain, finished with 13 points and five assists in 32 minutes. He was disappointed with the loss, but satisfied with how he felt physically after the game. "I was a little nervous about what I could do," Paul said. "It's one thing in practice, playing two-on-two, but it's another thing playing at game speed. But I'm excited because now I feel good to go."

Allen wore a wrap on his right hand in the locker room following the game, but said he'd try to play Thursday night in Dallas.

David West had 15 points and Hilton Armstrong 14 for New

Orleans.

With the game tied at 64 through three quarters, Paul rested during the first 5 minutes of the fourth, when House made two 3-pointers and scored eight points to help the Celtics surge to a 79-67 lead.

"When it's the fourth quarter you've got to make them count. I got the looks and made sure I took my time with it and knocked them down," House said. "If you want to pick when you're going to knock your shot down, you'd rather knock it down in the fourth quarter."

Rajon Rondo added a difficult floater in the lane and fed a bounce pass to Leon Powe for a dunk during the spurt.

"Rondo does a great job finding open guys, and when he wasn't finding open guys he was finishing at the rim," Pierce said.

Paul returned with about 7 minutes to go, but it was too late. Rasual Butler's 3-pointer got New Orleans within eight points with a little over 6 minutes left, but Pierce fed Powe for another dunk to get Boston's lead back to 10, Garnett added a jumper and the Celtics led by double digits the rest of the way.

Powe finished with 11 points for Boston and Rondo had 11 assists.

### Cavaliers 109, Suns 92

At Cleveland, Mo Williams scored a career-high 44 points and LeBron James added 26 as the Cavs bounced back from their first two-game losing slide this season with their 40th victory.

Williams was 18-of-26 from

the floor and made seven 3-pointers against the Suns, without starting point guard Steve Nash, who didn't dress to get extra rest for numerous sore spots.

Amare Stoudemire scored 27 points for Phoenix.

At Orlando, Fla., Carmelo Anthony had 29 points and eight rebounds, and Denver ended a 15-game losing streak in Orlando. Kenyon Martin scored 13 points, Nene added 12 and Chauncey Billups had 11 points for the Nuggets, who hadn't won in Orlando since March 10, 1992. □



Boston Celtics guard Paul Pierce (34) and New Orleans Hornets guard Chris Paul (3) talk during a break in the action in the second half of their NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009. The Celtics defeated the Hornets 89-77.

Associated Press



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# Gordon wins 1st duel to earn Daytona 500 spot



By JENNA FRYER  
AP Auto Racing  
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Jeff Gordon ended the longest winless drought of his career with a victory in the first of Thursday's twin Daytona 500 qualifying races. The four-time Cup champion, coming off his first winless season since his 1993 rookie year, climbed from his car in

Victory Lane and immediately reached for his young daughter. Ella was just an infant during his last victory celebration, back in October 2007. "I've been fortunate enough to visit Victory Lane quite a few times, but not many times as a father," Gordon said. "There's nothing more special than that."

The non-points Gatorade

Duel doesn't officially count for anything in Gordon's victory total, but it gives him a second-row starting spot in Sunday's Daytona 500. It also gives him much-needed momentum after his disappointing 2008 season. "Who says we can't win?" Gordon asked. "This team has been unbelievable. We all know what we went through

last year by not winning. There's a lot of expectations on this team, but they never wavered. The guys just kept working hard, building great race cars.

"I'm really excited about the Daytona 500 after that race. It's been awhile since I've been to Victory Lane. I've got to take advantage of this." Tony Stewart finished second and defending three-time series champion Jimmie Johnson was third. Joey Logano, the 18-year-old rookie who replaced Stewart at Joe Gibbs Racing, finished fourth.

Stewart, off to an impressive start as driver/owner of Stewart-Haas Racing, earned the first transfer spot into the 500 based on his finish. He'd technically already earned one through time trials, so it opened up a spot in the 500 for Regan Smith, last year's top rookie who lost his ride at the end of the season.

The second spot went to Scott Riggs, driving for six-week-old startup organization Tommy Baldwin.

Riggs earned his spot in the

500 by racing his way from 11th to eighth in the final five laps.

"It feels absolutely awesome. It's like we just won the race," Riggs said.

Riggs lost his job at the end of last year when Stewart took over control of Riggs' former race team and revamped the driver lineup. With no other ride lined up, he turned to Baldwin, who lost his job running Bill Davis Racing when that operation folded at the end of last season.

"What really made the decision for me was when I talked to Tommy and just heard the passion in his voice," Riggs said. "Man, I am just elated."

Logano had a similar reaction after completing his first Cup race at Daytona International Speedway. He crashed out early in last weekend's exhibition Budweiser Shootout, costing him much-needed track time to learn the nuances before the biggest event of the year.

Although he slid through his pit box during his first stop — repeating a mistake he made during last week's ARCA race — Logano had a clean race from there and was running with the leaders in the closing laps. "That's a big deal for us," he said. "To get out of here and finish the race is priority one. This is the most I've learned so far since I've been out here and I feel like I really used a lot of it at the end of the race." □

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SELIG

Continued from Page B16

Rodriguez's admission came two days after Sports Illustrated reported on its Web site that he was among 104 names on a list of players who tested positive for steroids in 2003, when testing was intended to determine the extent of steroid use in baseball. The results weren't subject to discipline and were supposed to remain anonymous, but were seized by the government in 2004 and remain under seal.

"When I arrived in Texas in 2001, I felt an enormous amount of pressure. I felt like I had all the weight of the world on top of me and I needed to perform, and perform at a high level every day," Rodriguez said in an ESPN interview.

Though Rodriguez said he experimented with a number of substances, he has not provided details.

"It was such a loosey-goosey era. I'm guilty for a lot of things. I'm guilty for being negligent, naive, not asking all the right questions," Rodriguez told ESPN. "And to be quite honest, I don't know exactly what substance I was guilty of using."

Much of Selig's statement Thursday was a recitation of his efforts to get a drug agreement with the union and then toughen it. With baseball officials under pressure from Congress, negotiators from management and the union strengthened the program in January 2005, November 2005 and April 2008, toughening the penalties and tightening the rules.

In 2008, there were three major-league violations and 69 minor-league violations. This year, there have been two major-league and two minor-league violations so far.

"We are fully committed to ridding our game of steroids and other performance-enhancing substances. These drugs and those who use them and facilitate their use threaten the integrity of our sport," Selig said. "... But we will not rest or relax our efforts until the use of these illegal drugs are gone from baseball." □

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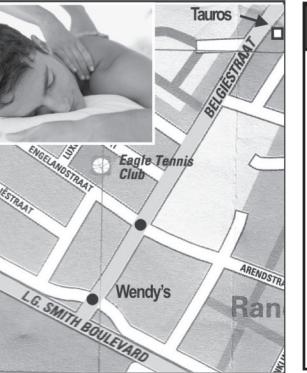
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week# 1,2,3,4 ArubanRes-1Bdr. R#1586,poolview- US\$8,000pw	week# 4 & 5 DiviPhoenix -studio R#108,Oceanfr.-US\$12,000pw	week# 7-DiviPhoenix - studio R#105,OceanPo,US\$11,500
week# 1,2,3,4 ArubanRes-1Bdr. R#3586, poolv- US\$7,000pw	week# 2,Aruban Resort-1 Bdr. R#4584 ,PoolView-US\$.8,475	week# 3 - DiviVillage - Studio. R#8303,PoolOcean-US\$8,000
week# 4 Aruban Resort- 2Bdr. R#5510,poolview- US\$12,000	2x week2-17,OccidentalGr-1Bd. supreme,Oceanfr. - US\$35,000	week# 1-RIU Palace - 2Bdr R#269,Oceanfront-US\$18,000
For Rent.ParadiseB- week 4&5 R#108,poolv- US\$1,500pw	week# 2, ParadiseBV - 2Bdr. R# 207,Ocean/Pool-US\$15,000	week# 5&6-La Cabana - 2Bdr R#440b&c,Oce/p-US\$20,000pw
Platinum W#1-17.Marriott Surf. 2Bdr,OceanSide -US\$33,000	week# 3&4, ParadiseB.V - 1Bdr. R#101,Ocean/p-US\$12,000pw	week# 5 - La Cabana -1Br R#336a,Ocean/pool-US\$11,000
Platinum W#1-17.Marriott Surf. 2Bdr,OceanView US\$30,000	week# 4, ParadiseB.V - 2Bdr. R#129,Oceanfront - US\$24,000	week#11,Dutchvillage- 2Bdr R#46&49,PoolV US\$18,000pw
Week# 7,La Cabana - 1Bdr. Room#339,OceanFr-US\$8,000	week#8 ,Aruban Resort - 1Bdr. R#1537, Poolview - US\$9,000	For rent: week 8, Renaissance- R#2536,1Br-OceanV-US\$1,500
Week# 7, La Cabana - 1Bdr Room#429c,OceanVi-US\$9,000	week# 8&9,Aruban Resort,-1Bdr R#1519, Poolv- US\$18,000 p.w.	week#10.DutchVillage-1Bdr R#121,Poolview-US\$8,000

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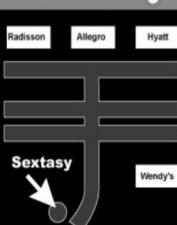
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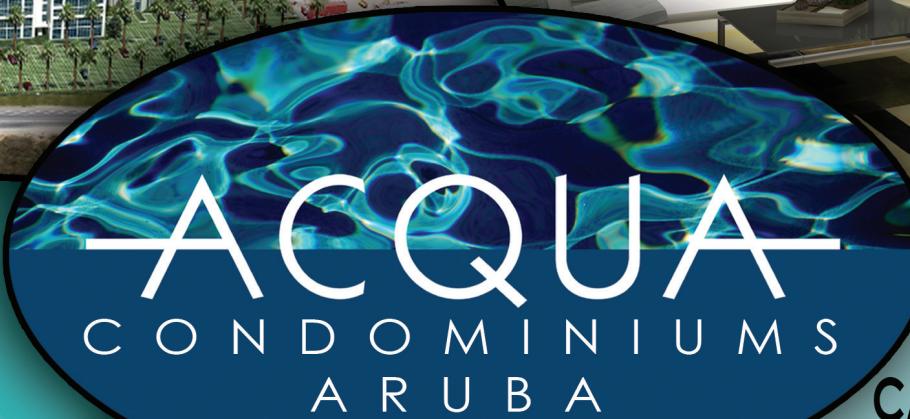
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# Rostro de Obama, listo para dominar el Carnaval de Río

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) -Barack Obama conquistó a la mayoría de estadounidenses y se convirtió en el primer presidente afroamericano de su país, y ahora lidera las preferencias de quienes buscan máscaras para el Carnaval de Río.

En una tradicional fábrica cercana a Río de Janeiro, la elaboración de máscaras reproduciendo el rostro de Obama marcha a todo vapor y promete dar los mayores beneficios a sus propietarios. Incluso antes de comenzar el Carnaval y calentarse las ventas, la fábrica de máscaras Condal produjo 12.000 "copias" en plástico del rostro del presidente estadounidense.

"Obama está hecho desde junio y lo guardamos hasta las elecciones (estadounidenses) de noviembre", dijo a Reuters TV la empresaria Olga Vallés, al mando de la fábrica instalada en Sao Gonzalo, a unos 75 kilómetros de Río, tras la muerte de su marido



Máscaras hechas a partir del rostro del presidente Barack Obama en una fábrica de disfraces en Río de Janeiro, 10 feb 2009. Barack Obama conquistó a la mayoría de estadounidenses y se convirtió en el primer presidente afroamericano de su país, y ahora lidera las preferencias de quienes buscan máscaras para el Carnaval de Río. REUTERS/Bruno Domingos

el español Armando Vallés en el 2007.

"Después que ganó, comenzamos a producir. Hemos recibido pedidos de Europa y de todo Brasil", agregó. El campeón de ventas de máscaras en los últimos años ha sido el líder de Al

Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, cuyo rostro en plástico es buscado principalmente por los aficionados al humor negro, según la empresaria.

Después de los ataques del 11 de Septiembre contra Estados Unidos, suman más de 50.000 las máscaras del barbudo Bin

Laden hechas en la fábrica, para su venta en Brasil y el exterior. Pero ahora parece ser mayor la búsqueda por las máscaras de Obama para lo que se considera la mayor fiesta popular del mundo, que se extiende del 21 al 25 de febrero.

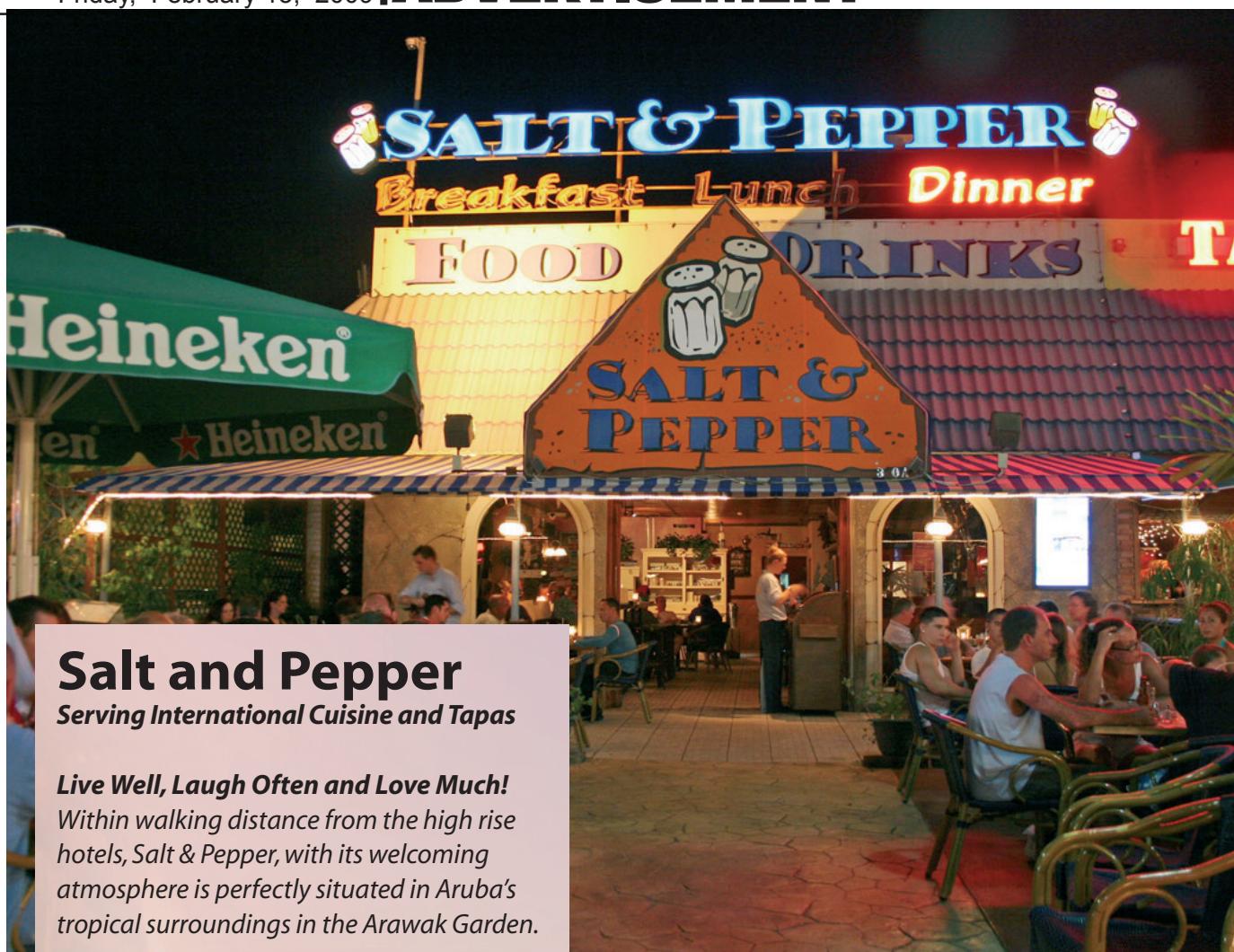
La estudiante Andrea Félix,

de 22 años, quien buscaba sombreros, collares y flores para componer su disfraz carnavalesco, decidió comprarle a su madre, fan del presidente estadounidense, una máscara de Obama.

"A ella le encanta Obama. Y está muy parecido, aunque se ve un poquito más gordo", dijo con tono crítico observando la máscara, algo más cachetuda que el original.

Y en este Carnaval, el rostro del mandatario estadounidense parece preparado a desbancar al de Bin Laden en los bailes carnavalescos de Brasil, y aún al del presidente brasileño, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

"La máscara que se vende más es la de Obama, después viene la de Lula", dijo Ronaldo Turuna, gerente de un comercio especializado en disfraces y artículos para Carnaval de la región central de Río. □



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